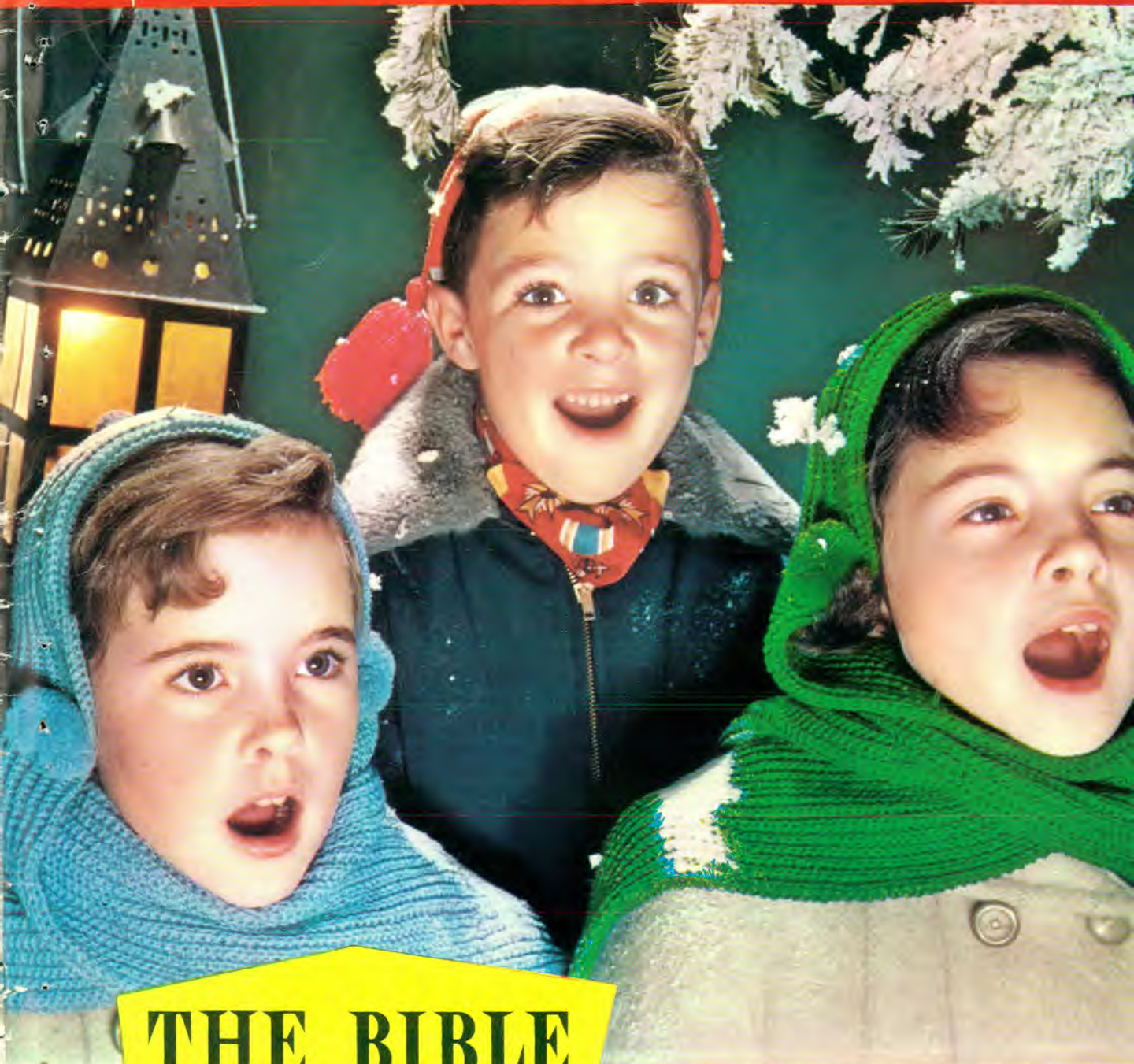




CHRISTMAS NUMBER



THE BIBLE

AND

OUR TIMES



No Room in the Inn!

By Mrs. M. H. Cooper

No room in the inn of old! no room
For the Saviour's infant birth;
No welcome from His own
When Jesus came to earth;
No place save a manger lined with hay
For the Son of Man His head to lay.

No room in my heart—no room? no room
For the gift of heav'nly peace?
No welcome while He waits
To bring my soul release?
Oh! shame on me that I treat Him ill,
When amazing love reveals God's will.

Yes! room there is in my heart, dear Lord!
Be born anew in my soul;
Come in and commune with me,
Oh, cleanse and make me whole;
Accept my praise with wise men of old;
Though poor my gift; transform it to gold

John Bridges

THE BIBLE AND OUR TIMES

A Family Journal of Christian Living. Dedicated to the proclamation of the Everlasting Gospel. Presenting the Bible as the Word of God and Jesus Christ as our All-Sufficient Saviour and Coming King.



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CONTENTS

EDITORIALS

The Angels' Song	4
Tilting at the Ten Commandments	5

GENERAL ARTICLES

True Christmas Cheer	<i>Ernest Cox</i>	6
Cards and Christianity	<i>R. D. Vine</i>	8
The Sign of the Star	<i>G. Elliott</i>	10
The Perfect Gift	<i>Mary J. Vine</i>	12
The Bible, Science, and You.—2		
Why I Believe in God	<i>J. A. McMillan</i>	14
Why All These Wonders?	<i>K. A. Elias</i>	16
Palestine Panorama.—2		
The Golden Star Leads On	<i>Charlotte Hastings</i>	18
The Life Beyond.—2		
Immortality or Resurrection?	<i>Leslie Shaw</i>	21
The Story of a Lost Day.—2		
How the Sabbath was Lost	<i>A. J. Woodfield, M.A.</i>	23
When the Christmas Bells Ring No More	<i>J. R. Lewis</i>	25

REGULAR FEATURES

Prophecy Speaks!	<i>S. George Hyde</i>	27
The Children's Pages		32
Mirror of Our Time		35

POEM

No Room in the Inn	<i>Mrs. M. H. Cooper</i>	2
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This month . . .

WE explore again the ever-wonderful theme of God manifest in the flesh as the Babe of Bethlehem and the Man of Calvary. Dedicated Christian writers—ministers of the Gospel and laymen—recall to our minds the angels' song, the coming of wise men from the East, and the miracle of the Incarnation.

From a study of Christmas cards R. D. Vine discovers a significant sign of our times, while Mary J. Vine reminds us that the most wonderful Christmas gift of all is the Gift of Jesus.

Many will be led with a new urgency to hearken to the message of the Christmas bells when they realize, from J. R. Lewis's article, that one day the bells of Bethlehem will be stilled and the trumpets of divine judgment will sound.

Appropriately at this Christmas season Charlotte Hastings in "Palestine Panorama" takes us to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, where we descend into the Cave of the Star to meditate again on the wonder of the manger birth.

Cogent reasons are provided by J. A. McMillan why he believes in an all-wise, all-powerful, and all-loving God, and why we should believe too.

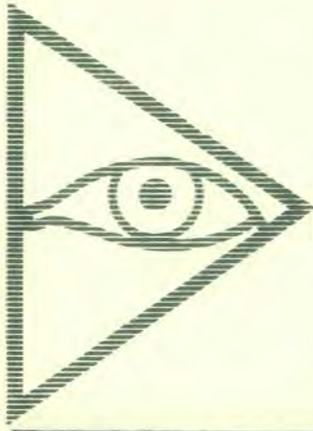
We continually marvel at the spectacular increase of knowledge and power in our day. K. A. Elias explains why all these wonders have so suddenly burst upon the world.

Continuing his studies on the life hereafter, Leslie Shaw explains the importance of the doctrine of the resurrection and its relation to the second advent of Jesus.

Many who have puzzled over the question of Sabbath and Sunday will be interested in A. J. Woodfield's account of how the true Sabbath came to be lost.

The children will enjoy their three pages of Christmas stories and poems.

The next issue will be our New Year Number. It will be packed with inspirational articles on many Bible topics and will deal with momentous signs of our times. It will help all who read it to enter the New Year with courage and hope in the promises of God. So make sure that you get your copy.



DISCERNING THE TIMES

CURRENT EVENTS
IN THE
LIGHT OF
THE BIBLE . . .



BY
THE
EDITOR

DURING the next few weeks we shall undoubtedly be urged time and again to "hark" to the "herald angels" and ponder anew the theme of their song, "Peace on earth, good will to men." Luke 2:14.

Sad to say, however, many will go back to their newspapers and magazines after pausing to listen to carollers at their door or the voices which enter their homes through the medium of radio and television, and dismiss the whole story as a beautiful legend, but quite unrelated to the outworking of human history. For, though nearly two thousand years have passed since the angels sang high over Bethlehem's fields, there is little sign of the coming of the peace which they proclaimed.

Never indeed has peace seemed farther away than from our world today, in which two vast groups of nations face each other armed with the deadliest weapons ever conceived by man, which, at the pressing of a button, could scorch bare the surface of the earth and blast the entire human race into oblivion. Little wonder, indeed, that the "angels'

The Angels' Song



Christmas lights in Trafalgar Square.

song" should seem unreal and illusory and that men should doubt if it will ever come true.

But though the outlook may be dark and the hearts of multitudes may be filled with fear as they look "after those things which are coming upon the earth" (Luke 21:26), there are yet solid grounds for hope.

That hope is not in the deterrent power of nuclear armaments or in the capacity of the United Nations to organize peace. It is not in man at all, but in God who alone can "cause wars to cease unto the end of the earth." Psalms 46:9.

The reason that the promise of the angels has not been fulfilled is because men have failed to realize what the angels distinctly declared, that "peace on earth" is inseparably associated with "glory to God," and it is because God has not been given the glory due to His name that peace has receded farther and farther from the earth.

When the apostle Paul was analyzing the human situation

in his letter to the Romans he pointed out that the world's sorrows began when men ceased to "glorify" God and turned to "worship and serve the creature more than the Creator." Rom. 1:21-25.

God could, of course, had He chosen to do so, have halted man at once in his evil tracks, but if He had done so the allegiance of His creatures would thereafter have been based on compulsion rather than on love. So instead, as men "did not like to retain God in their knowledge," God for a time gave them their head. He "gave them over to a reprobate mind" to work their evil works and, as He foresaw, it was not long before the heart of man and the earth itself was "filled with all unrighteousness." Rom. 1:28, 29.

At the Incarnation, in the midst of the ages as it were, Heaven broke into history with the message

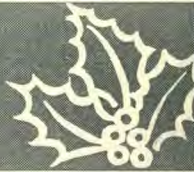
have misappropriated His world for their own evil purposes. He is coming to sweep aside the "kingdoms of this world" and to establish in it His own kingdom of righteousness and peace.

When Jesus bade farewell to His disciples He also said to them, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27), and He commissioned them and their successors, through the preaching of the Gospel and the agency of the Holy Spirit, to spread that "peace" in the hearts of men against the day of His return. And when He comes back, as He promised, it will be those alone who have received this peace into their hearts who will be admitted to His kingdom.

How much longer the voice of the angel with God's last message will continue to plead we do not know. But we may well pray that, as it adds urgency



Christmas Greetings TO ALL OUR READERS



of "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11), and the assurance that if men would now give "glory to God in the Highest" He would bring them "peace on earth."

But the world took little notice. The light faded, the angels returned to their heavenly abode, and when the Babe grew to manhood they crucified Him. And so there is still no peace on earth. Indeed, it would seem that if man continues to have his way there will soon be no earth for there to be any peace on!

But this tragic situation is not to continue much longer, for today the "loud voice" of another herald angel, the angel of God's last message of mercy which John the Revelator was shown in vision, is sounding "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," reiterating the call to "glorify God," but with a new urgency. "Fear God, and give glory to Him," the angel is crying, "for the hour of His judgment is come." Rev. 14:6, 7.

God has been long-suffering, "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9), but He does not intend to leave wicked men for ever in possession of His world. The message of the angel now "flying in the midst of heaven" is that "the day of salvation" is fast running out and that the end of the world's probation is very near.

Just before Jesus, His earthly mission completed, returned to His heavenly home, He assured His disciples, "I will come again." John 14:3. And when He comes the second time there will be no question of His being "rejected of men." He is coming in power to take over the dominion from those who

to the song of the "herald angels" this Christmas-tide, many may be led, while there is still time, to give God the "glory" due to His name and to receive His "peace" into their hearts, that when the hour of His judgment at last breaks upon the earth, they may be among those who will qualify by grace for a part and a place in His everlasting kingdom

Tilting at the Ten Commandments

EVERY now and then a minister of the Christian church gets into the news by tilting at the Ten Commandments. The latest to come to our notice is the Rev. G. Wilkins, rector of Ascot, Berks., who, according to a report in several Sunday newspapers, has decided to drop the recital of them in his church services because, he avers, they are "Jewish" and "not Christian" and because they give the impression that "religion is just a series of prohibitions."

It is not difficult to show, however, that these two criti-

(Continued
on page 28.)

Gaily decorated
lamp-posts
on the
Champs-Élysées
in Paris.





Amid all the jollity of the festive season let us remember the greatest reason for joy at Christmas time.

"Scrooge" indeed who could not be softened and somewhat "reformed" by the prevailing atmosphere of good-will and good fellowship which characterizes Christmas.

Not out of a "bottle"

Unfortunately, there are many people these days who seem only able to extract a large part of their brand of "Christmas cheer" from a bottle! They often estimate the happiness of Yuletide according to the size of the bill they will afterward have to meet from the wineshop.

But *true* Christmas cheer—that alone which is genuine, lasting, fully satisfying, and which leaves no regrets—comes not from a bottle, but from a Book, and that Book—the Bible!

T R U E

By Ernest Cox

It is significant that the first Christmas made its initial impact upon persons belonging to widely separated social classes. A celestial chorus startled and enlightened the humble shepherds, while a phenomenal star intrigued and guided the affluent Magi. Thus, both peasant and prince, fresh from pasture or palace, were divinely guided to the Holy Babe, and in His presence found the blessing of true Christmas cheer.

The Persian Magi, whether or not they were of royal blood, were persons of considerable wealth, undoubtedly enjoying much social and intellectual prestige. But their earthly concerns, however legitimate and engrossing, did not prevent their being primarily interested in heavenly matters. They studied the stars. They gave particular attention to the regular movements of the celestial bodies. And when they were surprised by the sudden appearance of a strange, unusually bright, and uncharted star, they probably remembered the unfulfilled prediction of Balaam, one of their own Eastern prophets: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel. . . . Out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion." Num. 24:17, 19.

And so, burdening themselves with such gifts as befitted both their own exalted rank and the importance of a royal occasion, they left their palatial homes, took a long and hazardous journey, coming

DURING the radio "Children's Hour" recently, the young folk were introduced to a make-believe, but obviously dreadful land, where it was said to be "always winter, but never Christmas."

Probably it would be impossible to suggest to youthful minds a more grim and forbidding place. And even older listeners must have been relieved that such an awful country only existed in someone's fertile fancy.

For the mere prospect of a "winter without Christmas" would be truly appalling! How could we possibly face the dreary days, the long nights, the wintry weather of bleak January unless we had previously been fortified with a good measure of hearty Christmas cheer?

For without doubt the traditional English Christmas makes the prospect of the closely following winter somewhat easier to bear. Christmas is both a hearth-warming and a heart-warming season, and something, at least, of its glowing warmth remains to lessen the icy impact of January's searching blasts.

What is it then, about Christmas, which so successfully imparts to us older ones, as well as to the younger, a measure of fortitude and inner warmth with which to face the winter?

The answer is to be found in what we often speak of as "Christmas cheer"—that warm feeling of well-being which invariably accrues from happy family gatherings and special festivities, together with the joyful giving and receiving of presents and appropriate greeting cards. He would be a miserable

eventually to Jerusalem with the anxious inquiry, "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." Matt. 2:2.

Somewhat naturally, by human standards, they turned aside to seek the royal Personage in Jerusalem's royal palace. But here they were disappointed. Here they found, not happiness, but base intrigue. Here, in the royal residence there was no glad desire to find, and worship the divine, infant King of the Jews, but only a settled and evil determination to destroy Him. Though they were deceived at first by the plausible Herod, God intervened to save them from becoming the innocent instruments of his cruelty.

Although puzzled by the fact that their search must now continue outside the capital, nevertheless when they again "saw the star," the celestial sign



The arrival of Father Christmas brings great excitement to the children's ward of a London hospital.

astronomers, He chose to arouse the wonder and awe of a few simple shepherds by means of the glorious songs of a company of angels. "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. . . . And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God." Luke 2:9, 13.

The angels' human auditors, however, were neither numerous nor impressive. And even they, at first,

CHRISTMAS CHEER

of God's approbation and leadership, "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." Matt. 2:10.

Surely the lesson is that true Christian cheer and well-being are entirely independent of elegant homes and lavish living. Indeed, it was in strikingly opposite surroundings from these that the Magi's search was finally ended and their costly gifts presented. Instead of a throne they found a humble home, and they had royal audience in a lowly room. But the actual sight, at last, of the Infant Redeemer, was ample reward for all their toil, and became the source of their increasing joy.

While shepherds watched

Again, it is significant that while the Lord sent His special star to interest and guide these Eastern

This children's Christmas party emphasizes that there are no barriers of class or race around the manger of Bethlehem.



were far more frightened than inspired. But the heavenly anthem, intoned by flawless angelic voices, was but the beginning of a wonderful experience for these simple, highly privileged men. For their Christmas, and the Magi's Christmas, was not just a matter of an angel's song or a special star. Their Christmas was centred essentially in their sight of their Saviour.



Christmas is a time of happy family re-unions.

So it should be with us. Let our Christmas this year mean much more to us than just specially decorated homes, or kindly greetings, or happy family visitings. These things have their place, and a very important place at this season. But let our Christmas, like the Christmas of the simple shepherds and the noble Magi, be really and truly centred in our own sight of our Saviour.

We may not now approach His manger or His cradle, but we are still welcome at His "throne of grace," to take up the seasonable theme of "Glory to God in the Highest."



CARDS and CHRISTIANITY

By R. D. Vine

FEW among us are impervious to the charm and sparkle of Christmas cards. We appreciate the welcome colour they bring to the festive season. In doing this they make a small but real contribution in relieving the gloom of December's colourless days.

Successive years seem to swell this annual avalanche of colour and good-will. Costly though it is, we do not mind. Cards provide a good opportunity for contacting friends and relatives to whom we might never normally write. And as every recipient knows, they bring with them their own delightful brand of pleasure.

Good-natured groans about expense will always be heard; and cynics may even refer to the card manufacturing business as a racket. But none of us really mind. Scrooge, fortunately, died childless. Unlike this symbol of misanthropy, we welcome whatever serves to deepen the good-will of a season we all love. And that, of course, includes Christmas cards.

An unwelcome change

But something seems to be happening to our cards. Changes are evident—unwelcome changes. It is becoming more difficult to purchase "Christian" cards. Still holding their own are the snow-bound country cottages, the holly and the ivy, the candles and ribbons, the red-coated huntsmen and coachmen,

the ice-bound woodland brooks, and, of course, the friendly red-breasts.

But cards that portray that miracle of Bethlehem which Christmas is designed to celebrate, have to be really searched for. Cards which bear truly Christian messages, and that are "naive" enough to convey some heart-warming statement from the Bible, are comparatively few and far between.

Reflecting on this situation are the critical letters which have been received by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)—an organization which annually boosts its funds for child welfare by selling Christmas cards. A typical letter complains: "There is not a hint of the Christian festival in any of the excellent drawings available. . . . Christmas re-

minds me of Bethlehem and I, like so many Christians, just want to buy Christian cards."

No religious link

We are loath to criticize UNICEF's answer, in which they claim theirs is an international work, catering for all folk of every race and religion. They prefer Christmas cards that will not offend Hindus, or Moslems, or Buddhists, or Communists, etc., by being distinctively Christian. Because of this they plan always to have greetings cards with no religious link. Logical, perhaps; but rather a pity to make no special provision for those huge areas that are called Christendom.

It seems to us that, apart from their value in helping us annually to renew personal contacts, Christmas cards can, without at all seeming to be sanctimonious, effectively remind us of what is undoubtedly the world's most moving love story. In this way they provide a great opportunity to do good.

But the fact is that cards, like Christmas generally,



are becoming more and more secularized. Bethlehem, the Judean hills, the herald angels, and the infant Christ, are featured less and less, while grotesque caricatures and meaningless contemporary designs stridently take their place. The serene and lovely Bible messages are giving place to empty jingles and pathetic doggerel verses that are of little real value.

A reflection of our times

It is clear that our cards reflect an important trend and sign of the times. As they depart more definitely from the religious realm, they do but typify a general disinterest in the things of the spirit. Religious decline is one of the marks of modern Christendom—just as Bible prophecy predicted. The extent to which this spiritual slump has hit Britain was revealed by a fairly recent Mass-Observation Inquiry.

In a London borough, only one in twelve people had attended church or chapel once or more in the previous six months. It was also discovered that "nearly half the women, and two-thirds of the men,

as an anchor to the soul, and as a reliable guide for every phase of living.

Religion spells prosperity and progress. Lack of it spells insecurity and unhappiness.

Powerful possibilities

That's why we like the Christmas season. Its possibilities as a power for good, in reminding us of those things that really matter, are so very great. And not least of its distinctive media, are the popular greetings cards. We like it when their design and message are not merely innocuous or even inane, but refreshing reminders of the provision made by our Almighty God in the person of the Babe of Bethlehem.

Outstanding as a season and symbol of peace, Christmas is truly such only as it directs our troubled hearts to Jesus Christ. The world clamours for peace. Christmas, rightly understood, points us to the Prince of Peace—even to Christ who was born in that lowly Judean manger. Envisaging the time, the prophet



The disappearance of the nativity theme from Christmas cards is but one sign that the real significance of Christmas has been forgotten by the great majority of people today.

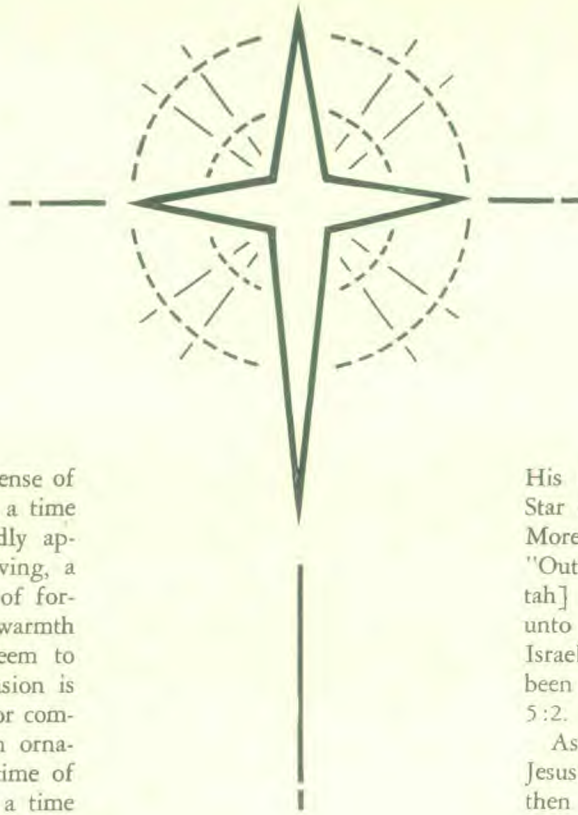
incline to think that there is no after-life, or are undecided about it." The Inquiry further revealed the very general view that "religion is all right in its place, but it shouldn't get involved in everyday affairs outside the private life of individuals."—*Puzzled People*, pages 18, 28.

This we believe, is the biggest weakness of our generation—separating religion from day-to-day living. Because of this, the proportion of those who are spiritually dead or moribund, is growing apace. Yet true religion should be the most important factor in our daily conduct. A beneficent God designed it

Isaiah declared: "Unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, *The Prince of Peace.*" Isa. 9:6.

Christ brings peace to burdened hearts by freeing them from the guilt and power of sin. He alone can do it. Such, indeed, was His main purpose in coming to this world. When the angel made that momentous announcement to the incredulous Joseph concerning the impending birth to the virgin Mary,

(Continued on page 13.)



CHRISTMAS, in the best sense of the word, is a time of joy, a time of peace, a time of friendly approach. It is a time for giving, a time for getting, and even of forgiving and forgetting in the warmth of greetings which then seem to thaw every heart! The occasion is surely one for celebration, for commemoration, not to mention ornamentation! It is withal, a time of song, a time of good will, a time of respect for symbols. For these, rightly viewed, underline the basic truths of the festive season.

One of the simplest yet most significant of Christmas symbols is the star. By definition a star may denote a luminous heavenly body, or figuratively a brilliant or popular person, a great leader or ruler. All too often the thoughts of those of our generation, are absorbed by the activities of their favourite "stars" of recreation, but the Christmas star calls to mind the infinitely greater Personality it is designed to honour.

In a remarkable Bible prophecy, from centuries B.C., a star is used symbolically to declare the lineage of the promised Messiah and the place of

His birth! "There shall come a Star out of Jacob." Num. 24:17. More precisely Micah declared, "Out of thee [Bethlehem Ephratah] . . . shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been . . . from everlasting," Micah 5:2.

As the time for the advent of Jesus drew near there were some then living in Palestine whose hearts began to be strangely stirred.

In this land of pious formality, there were some who, the record tells us, were truly "waiting for the consolation of Israel." Luke 2:25, 38. Many others too, in far-off lands were familiar with the Messianic prophecies. (Matt. 2:4, 6.) The wise men from the east, for example, interpreted the "Star" of Numbers twenty-four as a celestial Visitor and expected it also as a celestial herald of His appearance! "We have seen His star in the east," they announced at the end of their long journey, "and are come to worship Him." Matt. 2:2.

In Luke's gospel we read of "the glory of the Lord" which illuminated the sky directly over Bethlehem on that night of destiny long



The SIGN of the STAR

ago. Certain shepherds of earnest faith were occupied with their pastoral duties. Suddenly they were enveloped in light from heaven and from the midst of the brightness came the voice of an angel saying, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Then "a multitude of the heavenly host" of angelic beings joined in the anthem of praise with the words, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:8-14.

Worshipping the new-born King

The cluster of brilliancy and beauty formed by ranks of holy angels would, from a distance, have the appearance of a glittering star. It therefore seems certain that the oriental potentates who wished to pay homage to the infant Jesus, were guided not by the appearance of some astronomical "nova" but, by this heavenly "star." For when they had departed from Herod "lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. . . . And when they were come into the house, they . . . fell down and worshipped Him." Matt. 2:9-12.

"Worshipped," we ask; "why?" Because this Babe was in fact "God manifested in the flesh." "God with us." God incarnate. God the Son who proceeded "forth and came from God" the Father. (John 8:42.) The festival which commemorates the *humanity* of Jesus Christ must never be allowed to eclipse His *divinity*! As Zacharias testified of the Child supernaturally born in Bethlehem, "Whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us." Luke 1:78.

The Light of the world

There is much to be learned from a study of the symbols of Christmas. Is it not a season of light? How aptly the shops and stores interpret the motif of Christmas with their lines of high wattage lamps and banks of fluorescent tubes! And how beautifully these are supplemented by myriads of small coloured bulbs which flash and twinkle invitingly from residential front rooms! The darkness beyond deepens by contrast. That is how it is with the world. It was dark when Jesus made His Advent. It is dark now. Dark with sin. Dark with fear. Dark with antagonism. Dark with departure from God.

Then like the wise men, like the shepherds, like

the Greeks, like the seeking millions down the years, "we see Jesus"! Our need of physical light, be it solar, lunar, or electrical is as nothing compared to our need for the spiritual light that is found only in the One who claimed, "I am . . . the bright and morning Star." Rev. 22:16. "I am the Light of the world." John 8:12.

The Scripture tells us quite plainly that the purpose of His advent was "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Luke 1:79. Jesus Christ entered the world expressly to reveal God, and to lead groping sinners out of the shadows into the sunlight of His Father's love.

The divine touch

Some thirty years after the shining wonder of Bethlehem, an incident in the hallowed life of Jesus set forth still another aspect of His Incarnation. One day a leper, abhorred by his fellow-countrymen, pleaded with Jesus for restoration to health. Where our dear Lord said, "I will," His words alone would have sufficed to bring healing. But His gesture was eloquent with all the hungering love and compassion of the Godhead. "And Jesus put forth His hand, and *touched* him." Matt. 8:3. Touched the untouchable! Deliberately, movingly, tenderly, He, the Majesty of heaven, thus assured this despised outcast of earth, of His deep personal sympathy and kinship to him!

That too is what happened at Bethlehem. That was the purpose of Christ's Incarnation. Looking with infinite pity upon a leper world, made unclean by sin, the pure and stainless Son of God reached down and touched outcast humanity. Touched them in the closest and most intimate way by taking upon Himself our bodily likeness, by being "made flesh." Indeed He became for us "the Son of man" that we, through Him, might become the sons of God!

May the contemplation of the Child of Bethlehem lead us all this Christmas to reconciliation with the everlasting Father.

The Wise Men
from the east follow
the wondrous Star.



By G. Elliott

THERE were brides and bridegrooms-to-be, obviously carefully weighing basic necessity against desirable luxury. There were newly-weds, wiser and wistful. There were mothers and fathers, interested enough, but patently facing countless other demands. And there were those too who were past middle age, husbands indulgent, and wives plainly hankering, yet wondering nevertheless whether, at their time of life, either the expense, or even the acquisition itself of such a splendid piece of equipment, would be justifiable.

With true psychological insight, however, while she kept the ladies captivated with the facility with which she performed her culinary miracles, the eyes of this super cook-cum-saleswoman were on the gentlemen of the group, and did some amiable husband show the least assent, he was lost.

"I can see you are interested, sir. Why don't you give your order right now? Christmas? No, don't wait until Christmas. There'll be such a rush just before Christmas that supply won't be able to keep up with demand." And such is the threat of Christmas that many a good-natured spouse handed over his order forthwith.

Christmas!

We are scarcely back, empty-of-pocket, from our summer holidays, before the battering begins.

"Join our Christmas Club."

"Shop early for Christmas."

Only so many shopping days left!

Be sure and post early for Christmas.

Hurry up—*Hurry up*—HURRY UP!

Until the mind is in a whirl, and by shop-closing time on Christmas Eve, when, in any case, you positively can't do another thing about it, you are utterly weary and tired out.

But what a relief then to sit, and be sure you do, and for a little while at least ponder on the primal reason for all this.

The real Christmas

Though it is the giving time and the receiving time, and the coming-home time, and the happy-family-time, Christmas is Christmas without any of these. These are only trimmings, precious though they are, like the tinsel on the tree. If we don't open our hearts and receive for ourselves the Baby Princeling, then all this other is just a harrassing hurry and scurry and the selfish dispensing and acquisition of things.

And He, praise His Name, came to us all.

"Unto *you* is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11.



THE PERFECT GIFT

By Mary J. Vine



Above.—Mary brings her wonderful news to her cousin, Elizabeth.

Opposite.—Christmas is a time of giving presents, but the greatest of Christmas gifts is Jesus.

What a gift, and He is ours, yours and mine, no matter how lonely our plight may seem, nor how sorry our condition. He is ours, our own, "without money, and without price."

Neither by downright payment, however, nor by hire purchase can any one of us secure this supreme gift. He comes Himself imploring our acceptance, and He brings with Him this utterly complete and satisfactory guarantee, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Matt. 11:28-30. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Heb. 13:5.

Visitor at the door

We were privileged indeed on a recent Sabbath to have one of God's saints spending the day with us. It was thirty-five years since we had seen him last, but all those years had been spent in loyal, arduous service in difficult mission lands. Now he was paying a last visit to the scenes of his beginnings in the Christian walk, and so we found him there when we arrived at church. Gladly we brought him home.

Divested of his coat and other travelling impedimenta, the natural place to put him, of course, while we scurried to get the meal on the table, would have been the sitting-room. There is more comfort there. But no. "Don't put me forrard," he pleaded.

So, as we worked, we enjoyed the great pleasure of his company, his enthralling stories of God's interventions on his behalf, and like the two on the way to Emmaus, our hearts also "burned" within us. What God had done, God could do again, and that on our behalf, so long as we accepted His guidance equally humbly and faithfully.

There is Another today, longing for our hospitality and companionship, and He, too, begs not to be put

"forrard" in splendid isolation. He wants to come right in. What is more, when He is in, we shall discover that He is loaded down with benefits. He has made provision for our every requirement.

"Behold," He says, "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and be with Me."

"All that can satisfy the needs and longings of the human soul for this world and the world to come," writes Ellen Gould White, "is found in Jesus." There is no prison so deep or dark, but Jesus cannot bring us out of it. There is no enemy so strong, but the dear Lord cannot destroy. There is no request of faith so silent, but He will hear it for our good.

Whatever our lot then this Christmas time, and whether the great Christmas tide yields us little or much, whatever we do let us make sure of the best gift. We may not hear the angels sing or see a shining star, but

*Love lives on, whate'er betide,
And though our eyes behold Him not,
The Lord is ever by our side
Who once lay in a straw-lined cot:
But love must teach us to know Him near,
The perfect love that casts out fear
And will follow Him always and anywhere
Till it comes to a Bethlehem grot.*

*Each soul of man is a stable cave,
And though there may only be
Such a makeshift bed as a dog might have,
Right there most willingly
If there only be but a little room
And the door is open, Love will come
To make that narrow place its home
In a new Nativity.*

Christmas Greetings

(Continued from page 9.)

he said, "She shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." Matt. 1:21.

The same applies to that tantalizing will-o'-the-wisp we call world peace. Only Him whose birth we'll celebrate this Christmas will ever bring it to pass. He, and He alone, will do it. He will do it in His own spectacular way, making use of that mighty power which is now at His disposal. The Bible promises as much. The government will not properly be "upon His shoulders" until the day of judgment breaks upon us. Wonderful prospect for all who trust Him—though, we might add, only for those who trust Him!

Thinking of that first Christmas, the poet says:

*Of all the throng that hurried by
Did no-one lift his eyes
To read the glory of the skies?
Were all so worldly wise
That God should bid the angels sing,
Upon that midnight clear,
An anthem to the newborn King
And only angels hear?*

The intention was that all should hear and rejoice in the message of those herald angels: "Peace on earth: good will to men."

Without Him, there can be no peace. With Him, there will be peace for evermore. Blessings on those greetings cards which serve to emphasize this vital truth.

WE can never remove the possibility of doubt, so there will always be the need for faith. However, the increase of knowledge does provide additional evidence for belief in God. Lord Kelvin, one of the world's greatest physicists, has made the significant statement: "If you think strongly enough, you will be forced by science to believe in God." Quoting this, Dr. John Cleveland Gotham in *The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe*, says, "I must declare myself in full agreement with this statement."—Page 37.

It was this kind of reasoning that led John Ray back in the seventeenth century to say, "Science is a fit subject for a Sabbath day's study." And another eminent scientist confesses: "I want to be able to look at science, its methods, its presuppositions, its basis, its splendid successes and its austere discipline; and then I want to be able to say: Here is God revealing Himself for those with eyes to see."—Quoted by C. A. Coulson in *Science and Christian Belief*, page 30.

True it is that nowhere in the Bible is there a studied argument to prove the existence of God. The Bible does not argue about God; it reveals Him. Similarly nature, and all that science has discovered about nature, reveals a God of infinite wisdom, complexity of skill, and vastness of power. Every mystery solved in science opens up new mysteries more intricate than the ones solved, so that the scientist is for ever penetrating deeper into the unsearchable wisdom of God. As the philosopher F. H. Bradley asserts, "With certain persons the intellectual effort to understand the universe is a principal way of thus experiencing the Deity."—Cited by H. E. Huntley in *The Faith of a Physicist*, page 26.

The seen and the unseen

The Bible states that the universe in general and our world in particular reveal God. Twice it tells us that "the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Psa. 14:1; 53:1. The word "fool" (nabal) here means "an empty person; one who does not reflect deeply about what he sees." Both David and

WHY I BELIEVE IN GOD

PART 2.—
THE BIBLE
SCIENCE
AND YOU

By J. A. McMillan



The waving fields of corn testify to the bountiful provisions of a loving Creator.

All around us in nature are evidences of God's care for all His creatures.



Paul were convinced that the heavens and earth, with all their teeming life, reveal God's glory: "His everlasting power and divinity." Psa. 19:1; Rom. 1:20 (R.V.)

From the dawn of time, among all the tribes of earth, there has always been a deep-seated instinct in man for worship. Even among the primitive Fugians, whom Darwin described as devoid of speech or religion, later anthropologists discovered a vocabulary of some 35,000 words and a deep religious feeling. They claimed a revelation derived from Watauinewa, the Primordial, the Primeval. (See *Darwin is Not for Children*, pages 150, 151.)

No blind insensate world

Man has personality, speech, the power to reflect, to remember, to think and communicate his thoughts. Is it conceivable that the universe is nothing but a blind insensate machine and that man with all his warmth and wondrous complexity of personality is the product of this unthinking mass of matter? Bertrand Russell, out of the depths of his agnostic pessimism suggests just this. He wrote:

"That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving, that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand."—Cited in

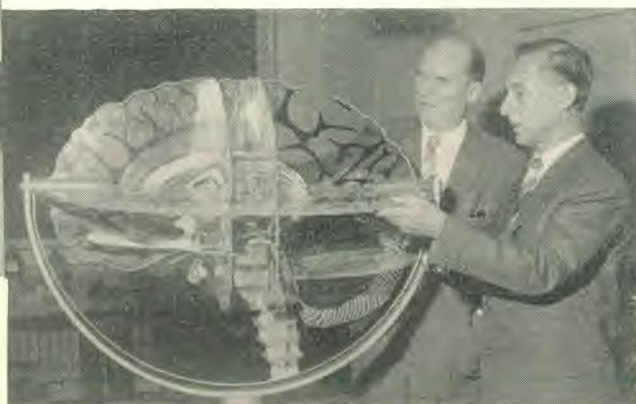
There must be an ultimate cause

It is a scientific fact that every event or effect must have an adequate cause. This being so it must be obvious that the order and system of the universe presupposes that infinite and Absolute Being as its Author.

Such a Being is the God who reveals Himself to us in the Bible. "There is none like unto Thee, O Lord; Thou art great, and Thy name is great in might. . . . The Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and the King of eternity: . . . He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established



Life cannot be explained merely in terms of chemistry and physics. It presupposes a Life-giver.



The more we learn about the human brain and the functioning of our bodies, the more we realize how right the Psalmist was when he declared that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made."

So Great a Mystery, page 200.

Such a doctrine must have been cradled in scepticism, nurtured in agnosticism, and addled in despair. Contrast this with Paul's vigorous and inspiring hope. He wrote from a prison cell, "Do not live any longer as the Gentiles live. For they live blindfold in a world of illusion, and are cut off from the life of God through ignorance and insensitiveness." Eph. 4:17, 18, J. B. Phillips. Man cannot reject God without crushing every fine and pure quality in his soul.

The existence of beauty, of music, poetry, and the rich variety of truth all conspire to speak of God as their author. As the Psalmist wrote:

*"When I consider Thy heavens,
The work of Thy fingers,
The moon and the stars,
Which Thou hast ordained;
What is man,
That Thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man,
That Thou visitest him?"*

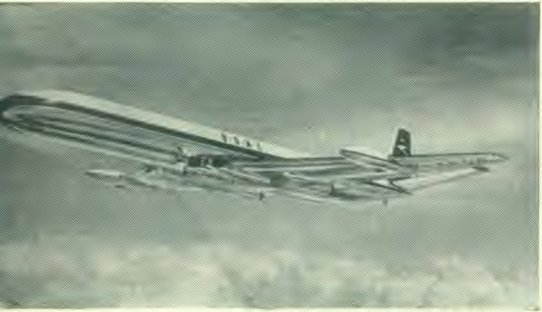
Psa. 8:3, 4.

the world by His wisdom, and by His understanding hath He stretched out the heavens: . . . The Lord of hosts is His name." Jer. 10:6-16, R.V., margin.

Again the evidences which the universe reveals of the skilful use of means toward an end, all cry aloud for the existence of a supreme Being who is wise in counsel and benevolent in purpose. As Leander S. Keyser, M.A., D.D., has ably written: "Note the many proofs of design in the world, and of adaptation of means to ends: the eye for sight (for what else could this organ have been intended?); the ear for hearing (how wonderfully constructed for its specific purpose!); the brain, the heart, the lungs, the digestive apparatus, the foot, the whole human organism, each part functioning specifically and all working together in a common purpose. Can anyone believe that all this could have come about by mere fortuity? That would be too great a miracle for even the most credulous to believe. But if God framed man's body as the Bible teaches (Gen. 2:7), all is clear as day."—*A System of Christian Evidence*, page 187.

David, not blessed with the minute knowledge

(Continued on page 29.)



For millenniums man's means of transport hardly changed. Then, a century and a half ago, a spectacular development occurred. The steam engine, internal combustion engine, electric and oil power produced an unparalleled speeding up of communications by land, sea, and air. Simultaneously human knowledge and technological capacity has expanded beyond all imagination.

WHAT a fascinating, yet terrifying, enigma is the world in which we live! Never in the history of mankind has there been such a wonderful time. Prosperity, full employment, ever-increasing leisure, ease to travel and speedy communications, a standard of living far surpassing the wildest dreams of our fathers—all have combined to make this the golden age of time. Truly has it been said, "Never have we had it so good."

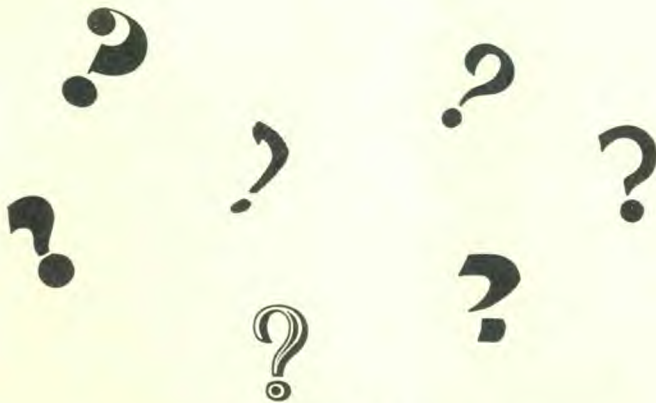
Yet even while the sun of progress bathes the world with its beneficent rays, from every point of the compass, the sky is darkening with thunder clouds of fear and distress, hate and suspicion, social unrest and international tension. No wonder then that energetic, eager men stand appalled at the enigma of our times and in bewildered agony cry, "Why, oh why, should these things be?" Why should the grandest time of earth's history be also the most terrible? Is it by chance that today man has the comforts and opportunities, ease and leisure which promise happiness for evermore, while at the same time he is threatened with the ever-increasing possibility of world destruction by the very forces that have put Utopia within his reach? Why has the wind of change which is sweeping not only Africa but the world become a hurricane which threatens to sweep the golden age into oblivion and all mankind with it? Why should these things be? Is there an answer to the enigma of our time?

Indeed there is an answer, but to find it we have to take down from our book shelves that all too often neglected volume, the Bible. What a paradox it is that the very Book which in recent decades has been ridiculed and relegated to the mental waste-paper basket is the one Book which has the answer we seek. Thousands of years ago God revealed in the Bible the very situation as it exists in our modern world, and showed not only why such a situation would arise, but also what its certain outcome would be. In one way H. G. Wells was right when he wrote regarding the world as he saw it, "There is no way out, or round, or through, This is the end." In another way he was radically wrong. For there is a way out round and through—a way that is guaranteed by the Infinite One Himself. We may be seeing the end of man-made utopias but we are on the verge of the real Utopia for which all men are basically yearning.

To understand then the enigma of the age let us turn on the searchlight of Bible prophecy for a moment. There in its bright beam are illuminated for us facts which are startling and basic to our understanding of world problems today.

First let us notice that while Scripture triumphantly tells us on the one hand that the world was not made in vain (Isa. 45:18), it just as definitely speaks about "the time of the end." Dan. 12:4, 9, 13. Here is no contradiction but, a declaration

WHY ALL THESE WONDERS



By K. A. Elias

that the world as we know it is to come to its climax and end, but that beyond God will re-establish the perfect world which He always intended for those who love Him.

The important thing, therefore is whether we can with certainty discover when that decisive "time of the end" in world history is to come.

If we turn to verse four of the twelfth chapter of Daniel's prophecy we learn that the coming of this "time of the end" would be marked by two startling changes in human life. Men would suddenly begin to "run to and fro" as they had never done before, and "knowledge" would be vastly "increased." Dan. 12:4.

From the dawn of time until a century or so ago man moved about the world on his own two legs, by animal power, by pulling on the oars of a boat, or by harnessing the wind by means of sails. For at least six millenniums no other means of locomotion was known, but suddenly, for no immediately apparent reason, a dramatic development took place. Sitting by his fireside, James Watt noticed something that had been happening since the beginning of time. He noticed how the lid of the kettle rose and fell by the power of the steam beneath it. For the first time apparently he glimpsed the tremendous potential latent in that power. As a

result the steam locomotive was invented and men began to "run to and fro" as they had never done before.

About the same time Thomas Edison and other experimenters came upon another source of power and began to investigate the possibilities of electricity and to apply them to practical use.

A little later the internal combustion engine was invented with the astounding result that today through these new means of power, distance has been annihilated and man has even laid plans to invade the stars. Truly men are running to and fro.

Nor have we any difficulty in establishing the fact that knowledge has been amazingly increased in the last century and a half, and that it is still widening daily. Truly, man is today "thinking God's thoughts after Him," even if, tragically, he lacks the wisdom to apply his abundant knowledge safely.

But recalling the words of Daniel that it was at "the time of the end" that men would begin to run to and fro and that knowledge was to be immensely increased, we are forced to the startling conclusion, that the "time" must have opened with the dawn of the nineteenth century and that we are at this very time living in the climactic days of this earth's history!

*(Continued
on page 29.)*

Today the printing press and the radio are carrying the Gospel message to the remotest corners of the earth.



PALESTINE PANORAMA-2

BECAUSE at this season the thoughts of all Christians turn to the Holy Babe who was born at Bethlehem, let us take a journey of some five miles from Jerusalem, to the little town now called Beit Lahm, with its white, flat-roofed houses clustered on the rocky hill-side.

It is strange to think that in this twentieth century, Mary and Joseph could not have travelled south from Nazareth to Bethlehem. For after passing over the the Plain of Esdraelon, and before reaching Jenin,

and Mary must have taken. They too came to the tomb of Rachael, and no doubt paused by the pillar which at that time called to remembrance their kinswoman. For the past two hundred years a white domed building has covered the ark-shaped sepulchre. Its small entrance is framed by a green painted facing, above which is a black grille to afford air and light. Inside, the vaulted roof is peeling. Once a place of pilgrimage for the Jewish people, it now has an air of neglect, although Moslems also venerate this tomb

THE GOLDEN STAR

barbed-wire and concrete road-blocks bar the way. Here stretches the northern frontier line between Jew and Arab. But in their day, they were free to go through Samaria to Shechem, where doubtless they stopped at Jacob's well, which in this hot, dry land constituted an important halting place. From there the road led by the heights of Ebal and Gerizim, and on over boulder-strewn uplands to Bethel where Abraham once pitched his tent, and where, in later years, in his flight from Esau, Jacob also came.

Maybe Joseph and Mary, on reaching Jerusalem, stayed at one of the khans, as the inns are called. The one we visited in the Street of the Chain would be much the same as then, for customs have changed little since biblical times. An arched stone entrance, high enough to allow access for camels laden with merchandise, led to a vaulted-roofed courtyard. From inside came a hubbub of discordant noises—squawking hens, sheep bleating, the stamping of mules and small, slender donkeys, tethered and feeding from concrete mangers on the walls, while the voices of Arabs shouted above the din. On each side, above our heads, was the protective balustrade of a gallery, opening onto which were the doors of many small bedrooms.

But at the khan in Bethlehem, those centuries ago, there was no room to accommodate the two travellers, when they arrived wearied by their long journey from Nazareth.

Doubtless they left Jerusalem by the Jaffa Gate, on the western side, but now at this point, No-man's land reaches to the very walls. Our car sped by a roundabout way along the fine, new macadamized road, built by the engineer corps of Arab legionaries, under the direction of Glubb Pasha. On either side were the stony, yellow-brown, Judean fields. After a detour we returned to the road which Joseph

By Charlotte Hastings

as well as those of the patriarchs, and a number of the prophets.

As we remember Rachael died on the journey to Bethlehem, when Benjamin was born. Her name became a synonym for the mothers of Israel. And especially those who in grief mourned the slaughter of the Innocents—the infants killed at the instigation of the monstrous Herod, in his unavailing attempt to stamp out the God-child, who was born to redeem mankind from the power of sin.

Memories of Bethlehem

From the top of a hill by the road-side a beautiful panorama is spread before our eyes. Behind in the distance is Olivet, and the walls, domes, and minarets of Jerusalem, reflecting the light of the golden Syrian sun. Joseph and Mary saw there the glistening white marble temple built by Herod. To the east the misted, blue mountains of Moab, that change to gorgeous hues with the passing hours, rise on the skyline behind the Dead Sea; and to the south a valley and then the prominence of Bethlehem. On the slopes around are terraces of vines, the twisted trunks of ancient olive trees, as well as almond and fig.

Away to the left are the Fields of the Shepherds with low dividing walls of large piled-up stones. Growing crops of corn and millet are to be seen. There are cypress and more olive trees. Somewhere in these fields, Ruth the Moabitess, who came with the widowed Naomi to live at Bethlehem, gleaned in the barley fields of Boaz. Later she became his wife,

and to them was born Obed in the line and genealogy of Jesus.

Among these hills and valleys, David the youngest son of Jesse, who was the son of Obed, led his flocks, guarding them both by day and in the night watches from the wild beasts which roamed them.

To Bethlehem came the revered prophet, Samuel to anoint David to be the future king of Israel.

Countless pilgrims have travelled along the Bethlehem road. Down the ages it has echoed to the measured tread of invading forces from many lands, and the ring of the horse hooves of Crusader knights.

LEADS ON



The Magi from the East, wise in their generation, waited patiently for the golden star, shining in the night-sky, to lead them on to "where the young Child was." Matt. 2:9.

The Church of the Nativity

Arriving in Bethlehem we walked across the long rectangular courtyard of uneven stone paving to the Church of the Nativity. This immense, austere, Roman basilica is the oldest Christian church in the world. First built in the time of Constantine, it was rebuilt by Justinian. And when, in the invasion by the Persians A.D. 614 all other Christian churches in the country were destroyed, this was spared. They saw the brightly coloured mosaic, picturing the Wise Men dressed in Persian style, worshipping before the Infant Jesus, and they, too, halted to enter the church and worship.

Now the entrance is barely five feet high, less than a quarter of the original arched one, which was blocked to prevent riders on horseback or marauders gaining admittance. Stooping low through the narrow opening we passed into the subdued light of the interior. The church is divided into five aisles by four rows of tall monolithic Corinthian columns of white-veined red sandstone, on which dim frescoes of saints, Crusader kings, and heraldic symbols are seen. A custodian raised several trap doors placed in the floor of the nave, and some three feet below we saw remains of the beautifully designed mosaic paving of the original church of the early fourth century.

Although the location of a number of the holy places is not really known, the authenticity of the Cave of the Nativity is well attested. The Emperor Hadrian, in his determined effort to stamp out



Steps on either side of the great altar in the Chapel of the Nativity lead down into the Cave of the Star.

Below.—Exterior of the Chapel of the Nativity in Bethlehem.



Christianity, built over it a temple to Jupiter. In so doing he very effectually helped to preserve its identity.

In the cave of the star

On either side of the great gilded altar two flights of narrow, worn, stone steps descend to the subterranean crypt below. Although fifty-three silver and bronze lamps of diverse shape and size depend from the low roof, the light is still dim. Seventeen of the lamps are tended by the Franciscans, and the others are looked after by the Greek Orthodox priests. The marble encased walls are covered with costly amianthus patterned curtains, a fireproofed type of chrysolite, given by a former French president. On the tapestries are many pictures of the Infant Jesus in the arms of His mother.

Gold embroidered crimson brocade curtains with deep pelmets frame the rock recess of the Place of the Nativity, the walls and floor of which are covered with white marble. Thirteen beautifully wrought silver lamps hang low over this, shedding light from their wicks in coloured glass containers upon the large fourteen-pointed star of silver, set in the centre. Surrounding this is an inscription in Latin, which translated reads, "Here was Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary."

Two pilgrims came and stood by our side as we looked at the star. Then kneeling, and with a smoothing gesture of the hands upon the marble they bowed and kissed the floor before it. There was no mistaking the devotion, but in such acts lies grave danger. For this cave and all the embellishments with which man has surrounded it possess no inherent virtue and to go to see or touch them in itself brings no power into the life, forgiveness of sin, or commendation from God. Only by individual communion with Him can this be obtained.

Of far greater service to mankind would be the removal of all the objects which distract the attention, and the placing in their stead of an illuminated Bible with pages open for all to read of the Messianic prophecies fulfilled at the birth of Jesus, and of the mediatorial work upon which He is now engaged in the courts of heaven on behalf of all who turn, in true repentance, to Him.

The Greek Orthodox hold the right to worship at the Altar of the Nativity. For the Roman Catholics

is reserved an alcove hewn in the rock on the opposite side, wherein are two altars. One with a short marble pillar on one side, and draped with brocade of green and gold, is the traditional spot where the Magi are said to have knelt in adoration though admittedly they did not come to the inn; the other marks the place where reposed the manger. A painted picture of the scene in a gold frame hangs above, and in front are more long silver lamps with shining red glass oil containers. On Christmas Day a replica of Jesus as an infant is placed here cradled on hay and illuminated by the lamps and many candles. The Greek Orthodox Church hold their celebrations thirteen days afterward, on January 7th.

Before leaving the basilica we looked into several adjacent subterranean caves. In one, Jerome translated the Scriptures into the Latin tongue. It was all rather dark and stuffy, and we were glad to come out again into the fresh air and sunshine.

The bells of Bethlehem

Behind the massive walls of large, roughly hewn stones bounding the courtyard, we could see two small belfries. From the taller one, belonging to the Franciscans, ring the chimes which are broadcast on Christmas Day.

As we walked to the market place, some matrons of Bethlehem passed by, wearing white, high-pointed head-dresses erected, so we were told, over a small fez foundation and dating back to Crusader times. Arab children gathered with their inevitable clamour for "baksheesh." In the small shops we saw many articles of carved olive-wood and mother-of-pearl. A number of pilgrims hurried by, following a priest, and we thought again of the message of the Star which "shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Daystar arise in your hearts." 2 Peter 1:19.

Dear reader, if you follow this golden, guiding light it will lead you surely, not only through the darkness and perplexities of this world but victoriously right through to the kingdom of God.

Left.—Rachel's tomb on the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.

Right.—The Fields of the Shepherds, Bethlehem.



IMMORTALITY or RESURRECTION?

By
Leslie Shaw

Tending the graves of the British airborne troops who died during the Battle of Arnhem in Holland.



THERE can be no doubt that the Bible doctrine of the resurrection from the dead has fallen into disrepute among many Christians. They no longer see in the resurrection what the Bible writers saw, the one hope of the realization of immortality.

Yet the Apostle's Creed, which is regularly repeated by many declares: "I believe in the resurrection of the dead."

The strange fact is that the majority of professing Christians do not even believe that the dead are dead. Instead they contend that it is only the body which dies and disintegrates, and that the "soul" or "spirit" which is, they say, the "real man," the true "ego," takes up another form of existence in a place figuratively spoken of in the Scriptures as "paradise"—or if wicked, in "hades," perhaps in torment. And if perchance one should point out that such an idea is not consistent with the Bible's teaching of "soul-sleep" at death, and of subsequent "resurrection," it is glibly replied that these concern only the body of man, and not his "spirit" or his "soul," for that part is immortal, and never dies. And so all such will gladly and enthusiastically sing:

*On the resurrection morning soul and body meet
again,
No more sorrow, no more weeping, no more pain.*

*Here awhile they must be parted, and the flesh its
sabbath keep,
Waiting in a holy stillness, wrapt in sleep.
For a while the tired body lies with feet toward
the morn;
Till the last and brightest Easter day be born.
But the soul in contemplation utters earnest prayer
and strong,
Bursting at the resurrection into song.*

Baring Gould.

It seemingly does not occur to those who sing so enthusiastically these words that if death is the means whereby the soul is liberated from its earthly prison to begin its life in a higher existence it would be a pity to imprison the soul in the body again at the resurrection. Why put it back into a body at all if it is true that the body is not the real man but only a dispensable exterior? Why does not God allow the soul to continue its higher untrammelled existence?

Not a part of Bible teaching

The plain truth is that these contradictory ideas, which are entirely out of harmony with the Bible's teaching concerning the nature of man, have been introduced into Christianity from non-Christian sources and have brought confusion into Christian

thinking. Emil Brunner emphasizes that in his work, *Man in Revolt*. "Much which is today regarded as a special sign of Christianity," he says, "would reveal itself on closer examination as the product of a spirit which is remote from that of the Bible." And again: "The stream of life which has sprung from the Gospel has carried along with it much of the *historical soil* through which it has flowed. In saying this we are not thinking only of the history of the Catholic church, but also of the Protestant church." He then specifically mentions Platonism, Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, as well as the Roman, Germanic, and Romance spirit, as sources of ideas imbibed by Christianity. Finally he adds, "There is a great deal of heathenism even in Christian speech."—*Man in Revolt*, page 459.

In Brunner's opinion because the idea that man has no future beyond this life is so obviously "false" the "human spirit has gone to the other extreme and claims that death is not the destruction of man," but "on the contrary, that it is a release, the emancipation of the soul from the prison of the body, the setting free of the soul from the burden of its base material partner." (*Man in Revolt*, page 464.) The Bible goes farther than this, and reveals that the first sermon on the natural immortality of the soul was preached by Satan to Eve in the Garden of Eden when he declared in direct contradiction of God, "Ye shall not surely die." Thus the doctrine is seen to be not an excusable, if erroneous, attempt to solve a universal perplexity, but the product of minds set in wilful rebellion against God.

Tracing the history of the introduction of the idea of inherent immortality into Christian thinking, Brunner says that the "idea of the immortality of the soul was born not of philosophy but of mystical religion, but it was eagerly seized and appropriated by philosophy." Then he goes on: "Plato was the first to combine philosophy, in his theory of Ideas, with the idea of the immortal soul, as he knew it from the Orphic tradition, and to weld them into a wonderful unity."—*Man in Revolt*, pages 464, 465.

Thus it is seen the idea of the natural immortality of the soul is something that has found its way into the Christian faith via Plato from the Orphic tradition, and has since been accepted as Bible doctrine, although it is quite contrary to it.

No wonder, therefore, that we are counselled by the inspired words of

the apostle Paul: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, . . . and not after Christ," Col. 2:8. One "vain deceit" of this false philosophic teaching is that the real man cannot die, and that it is only the body, the outward shell, the husk and not the kernel that dies. In contrast God said, "In the day that *thou* eatest thereof *thou* shalt surely die." When He says "thou" He is not talking of the body only; He is talking of the person himself, the man himself. When the body returns to dust the man himself dies. But Satan has taught man to disbelieve God, and to disbelieve the continuous witness of death around us. "Ye shall not surely die," Satan says, contradicting God. And in the midst of death, which is itself the complete verification of the truthfulness of God, man accepts Satan's testimony before God's!

Brunner says that the idea of the immortality of the soul came from "mystical religion" which is another name for heathenism. And the Bible most emphatically reveals that all such worship is devil worship. (Psa. 106:35-37; 1 Cor. 10:20, 21.) And this devilish doctrine is now looked upon as authentic Christianity!

"Scarcely any other idea in philosophy has had such an effect as this" doctrine, Brunner says. "Nothing shows more clearly the power of this idea than the fact that it was able to penetrate into Christianity," and "that for nearly two thousand years it was regarded as a Christian idea, although, as we shall show directly, it is *alien* to the genuine thought of the Bible."—*Man in Revolt*, page 465.

No immortal soul in the Bible

That Brunner is correct can easily be verified. Consider for instance that the words translated "soul" and "spirit" are used in the original Greek and

Hebrew of the New and Old Testaments around nineteen hundred times, but never once does a Bible writer call either "immortal." On the contrary, several times the soul is said to be capable of dying, is threatened with death, or even spoken of as being dead; yet to hear preachers talking about "immortal souls," and to read what

(Continued on page 30.)



The resurrection of Jesus assures us of the resurrection of all His people through Him.

HOW THE SABBATH WAS LOST

HOWEVER plausible the explanations and accounts of the process, and however innocuous their results may be presented as being, the fact remains that somewhere between the post-New-Testament age and the Reformation, one of the specific edicts of Almighty God, the Sabbath commandment given in solemn and impressive awfulness from the summit of Sinai, and enjoined on His people for all time, has been tampered with and mutilated. There is no trace of any change at all in the New Testament. The importance of the Sabbath rest needed no emphasizing there—it was plain to all and accepted by all. Addis and Arnold's Catholic Dictionary (art. Sunday) says:

"Our Lord did not during His earthly life abrogate the Sabbath. To do so would have been inconsistent with His position as one 'made under the

The Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath, but He only swept away their burdensome traditions which had made it into a trial and not a joy.



Only ceremonial law superseded

It was not the mission of Christ and His apostles to destroy the law: they simply fulfilled and established it. When that which was perfect was come, "that which was in part" was, it is true, superseded and left aside as superfluous. Hence we read of Christ "having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to

law,' and with His own express teaching (see especially Matthew 23:1-3)."

Nor did the apostles even consider such a change. They worshipped in the temple or in the synagogues. Paul, as his manner was, made a point of looking out the synagogues or places "where prayer was wont to be made" on the Sabbath day wherever he went. It was perfectly natural for them to do so inasmuch as they were converted Jews, and inasmuch as Christianity is obviously the logical fruition of the Jewish faith.

us: and He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." Col. 2:14, R.V. The context here is speaking clearly of the burdensome Mosaic ritual of circumcision (verse 11) food regulations, and ceremonial holy days. (Verse 16.) They were merely devices to prepare the way for Christ's glorious mission, and having fulfilled that purpose they were cast aside just as a satellite drops its spent rocket-propellant.

But of the abrogation of the moral law—the Decalogue—we hear no word. Indeed, to destroy that would nullify the whole of Christ's work, for

He came to demonstrate its practicability and to satisfy on our behalf its penalty for our transgression. He died to free Christians from its otherwise inescapable penalty of death, and rose again to keep them from coming once more under its power. Now He dwells in the heart of each believer, renewing his spiritual vitality, so that he may do nothing to come again under the condemnation of the law by breaking its precepts. This is the work of divine grace.

"What then?" asks Paul, "shall we sin [i.e., transgress the law], because we are not under law, but under grace? God forbid." Rom. 6:15, R.V. The Christian, the New Testament teaches, will naturally live in harmony with the precepts of the moral law, for he is born again to live as Christ lived: "We were buried therefore with Him through baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." Rom. 6:4, R.V.

James adds seriously the warning that contempt of any constituent part of the law of God is equally reprehensible and fatal, whether it be a despising of the prohibition against adultery, or murder, or, obviously and by clear implication, against theft, lying, covetousness, blasphemy, idolatry, or Sabbath profanation.

How Sunday observance began

So the apostolic church continued to rejoice in the day that God Himself had sanctified, enjoyed, and blessed, while at the same time they held frequent services from house to house and from day to day as opportunity provided. The book of Acts, although it shows that the early Christians, like the other Jews, engaged in religious worship in the temple every day and celebrated in their own homes a daily communion too (Acts 2:46), nowhere records or approves any change of the divine Sabbath from one day to another. But soon a movement began among Gentile Christians to hold larger services on the first day. Christians with no Jewish background tended in the post apostolic age, first because the first day would remind them of the glorious fact of the resurrection, and later because of a certain hostility to the nation that crucified Christ and a desire to have as little in common with them as possible, to make more of the gatherings on the first day. The earliest Fathers do mention assemblies for worship and especially for celebration of the Lord's Supper on the first day. Sunday is regarded by Justin Martyr as commemorating the creation of light and also the awakening of Christ, the "Sun of Righteousness" from the darkness of the grave. Others called the first day the "Lord's Day," the "Day of the Lord's Resurrection," and sometimes, when addressing the heathen, the "Day of the Sun" and showed that the

tendency was to treat it as a day of sacred joy and prayer. After Justin, the mention of the Lord's day as the weekly observance of the Christians becomes ever more frequent.

From Tertullian and other sources it seems that after the Apostolic Age, Sunday was looked on so increasingly as a day of rejoicing that fasting and kneeling at prayer were laid aside on that day. Tertullian advised the laying aside of the ordinary routine of labour, not as an act of obedience to the Sabbath commandment, but because it was fitting as an aid to increasing the joyfulness of the day and so that the soul might be freer to perform God's service.

No confusion between Sabbath and Sunday

This conception of Sunday persisted for a number of centuries but it is significant to note that no general attempt to substitute Sunday for the Sabbath day was thought of. No Christian asserted that Sunday was "the Sabbath of the Lord;" it was not identified with the seventh day enjoined by the commandment. It just crept insidiously into the religious routine of Gentile Christians and under a harmless garb gradually usurped the position of honour given by God to the day that commemorated the completion of His created works. It was, in brief, at first an interloper and gradually went on to assume the character of a changeling.

The growing popularity of Christianity in the Roman state led to civil legislation to regulate the status of Sunday. It became necessary to pass some law making generally applicable a common attitude to the weekly feast day to protect the Christian from various inconveniences such as being summoned before a court or called on for civil duties on a Sunday. Accordingly, the Emperor Constantine in A.D. 321 directed that the day be everywhere hallowed and observed appropriately. On Sundays, Christian soldiers were exempted from work so that they might have leisure to pray. A long series of imperial enactments relative to Sunday rest was thus inaugurated: law, business, and mechanical acts were forbidden in towns, though in the country agricultural labour was permitted. Thus, though the legislators knew it not, the way was being prepared for the complete establishment of a man-made festival in place of the divinely appointed and hallowed day of rest.

However, at this stage the new day was not equated with the old; it was only broadly associated with the genuine Sabbath. This, indeed, clearly continued as a cherished rest on the part of many, for the Synod of Laodicea (A.D. 343-381) declared against the faithful Christians who still hallowed the Sabbath day and threatened them with excommunication.
(Continued on page 31.)



WHEN
CHRISTMAS
BELLS
RING
NO
MORE

By J. R. Lewis

THE merry peal upon peal of bells from the church towers of England is a traditional part of Christmas day celebrations; the single rhythmic clang, clang, clang from the little mission; the sonorous reverberating peals from the stone tower of the parish church; the carol melody chiming out, note by note, from the belfry of the cathedral; tenors and bob-majors echoing across the Rhondda, floating along the dales, crashing around the mills; trembling trebles, fierce booming ten-tonners, fifty thousand bellringers calling Englishmen to remember that

*Christ the Saviour,
Is born to you this day.*

It was Paulinus, bishop of Nola, who began it all in A.D. 400. He hung a copper kettle upside down

on the roof of his church, beating it as a gong to announce the service. Patrick of Ireland assembled the faithful by ringing cowbells, and the first bells to be rung in Rome were the three hung in the belfry of St. Peter's by Pope Stephen in A.D. 752. And since these early days, some seventy generations of fathers and sons have obeyed the summons of the bells

*Come and worship,
Worship Christ, the new-born King.*

But the time approaches when the bells will no longer ring on Christmas morning. Every clapper will be motionless, and every bell mouth silent. For an event which will for ever supersede the Christmas bells is to occur one day: "The Lord Himself shall descend [the second time] from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God."

All who have enjoyed hearing Handel's "Messiah" will recall the chorus:

*The kingdoms of this world are become
The kingdoms of our Lord,
And of His Christ;
And He shall reign for ever and ever.*

The manifestation of Jesus of Bethlehem, celebrated every Christmas, is a pledge of the second manifestation of Christ in glory to take over the government and rule of the earth for ever.

And when our Lord returns in glory to set up His kingdom, the Christmas bells of the Incarnation will stop their ringing, and the trumpets of the second advent will begin to sound.

The bells will cease ringing because the celebrations of Christmas will be superseded by the far greater celebrations of Christ's enthronement in His kingdom.

General rejoicing there always is when a king's son is born in a palace; and his birthday is regularly honoured. But is not the day of the prince's coronation as king a greater occasion of rejoicing as thousands and tens of thousands line the decorated streets, and ermine-clad peers cry, "God save the King"?

In like manner the birthday of the Holy Babe at Bethlehem was memorable indeed, but when our Lord receives His ovation before the universe as King of kings and Lord of lords, it will be an occasion of surpassing splendour. The bells of earth will be poor music compared with the voices of un-fallen angels and redeemed men.

It is useless for the parish bell to toll for the farmhand at Stow-on-the-Wold to attend service when he has gone to Westminster for the coronation. And chapel bells will no longer serve any purpose when the faithful are "caught up to meet the Lord in the air" to partake of celestial joys. For thus it is written: "They shall see the Son of man, coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from one end of heaven to the other." Matt. 24:31.

There will no longer be need for bells when Bethlehem's Hero comes in glory.

But Christ has not yet come in triumph and the bellringers are even now practising for the Nativity festival, ready with another invitation of mercy.

To all the bells will have a message, "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Will you not see that some part of Christmas is spent in God's house as a token of your desire to be in God's kingdom one day? For whom do the bells ring? They ring for you!

One day the bells of Bethlehem will be silent and the trumpets of God's judgment will sound.



PROPHECY

SPEAKS!



By S. G. Hyde

The "Seven Seals" Opened

IN our previous study, we studied the story of the "seven churches," a prophetic delineation of certain well-defined aspects of the Christian church during the seven phases of its history. Now we are to consider another panoramic survey of the centuries—also in seven parts, namely, "the seven seals" by which the "sure Word of prophecy" perceived and revealed the church's changing experiences as she pursued her great mission of preparing for the triumphant return of her Founder and Lord.

In vision John saw a book, or scroll, containing seven prophetic sketches of the seven successive divisions of the church's story. But the sketches were "sealed" and unavailable until someone qualified for the task, could be located.

"I saw . . . a book . . . sealed with seven seals. . . . No man . . . was able to open the book." Rev. 5:1, 3.

As search was made for someone to open the book, the disclosure was made that only the Saviour, the Lamb of God, was able to break the seals and "open the book."

"Who is worthy to open the book? . . . Thou art worthy to take the book and open the seals: . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us . . . by Thy blood." Rev. 5:2, 9.

As the first four seals were broken there emerged a spectacular succession of horses and their riders:

1. White Horse.
2. Red Horse.
3. Black Horse.
4. Pale Horse.

The white horse symbolizes the going forth of the all-conquering church in the days of its first purity.

The first seal—the white horse period—reflects the period of the founding of the Christian church and portrays the remarkable conquests of faith proceeding from Pentecost.

"I saw . . . a white horse: and he that sat upon him had a bow; and a crown . . . and he went forth conquering." Rev. 6:2.

The second seal—the red horse period—reflects the great change that was to take place in the church following the death of the first apostles. The red colour symbolized the conflicts, persecution, and bloodshed which characterized the church during the second and third centuries.

"When he had opened the second seal . . . there went out another horse that was red: and power



was given to him [the rider] . . . to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another." Rev. 6:3, 4.

NOTE.—It was during this period that corrupt influences sought to effect a union of church and state leading on to the control by an apostate church of the sword of the state for its evil ends. This period began with the era of Constantine the Great, who first extended his imperial aid and sponsorship to the new leaders of the church.

The third period, possibly extending from the fourth century to the early part of the sixth century, was the "black horse" period, when the corrupters of the original faith, with the aid of the secular power, succeeded in establishing the dominance of the Papacy—the antichrist of prophecy.

"When he had opened the third seal . . . lo, a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand." Rev. 6:5.

NOTE.—The "balances" held by this rider, would seem to foreshadow the time when the corrupt church would become utterly commercialized—buying and selling church offices and the blessings which the Founder of the church had decreed should be "without money and without price."

The fourth period—the pale horse—whose rider was "Death" provides a tragic picture of the Papal era, viz., A.D. 538 to 1798.

"When he had opened the fourth seal, . . . I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed. . . . Power was given . . . to kill with sword, . . . with hunger, . . . and beasts." Rev. 6:7, 8.

NOTE.—With the submission of the secular powers to the Popes of Rome, the Papacy waged a merciless war of extermination in the vain hope of making herself mistress of the world. A conservative estimate of the number slain during this "night-time" of the world, is fifty million.

The papal domination of the "pale horse" period was brought to an end by the Reformation. This great deliverance and the termination of the papal supremacy, was foreshadowed, figuratively, in the message of the "fifth seal."

"When he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held." Rev. 6:9.

NOTE.—It was in A.D. 1798 that the weakening power of the Papacy received its death-blow when the Pope was taken prisoner by the French and imprisoned, resulting in his death a year later. But it was not the death of the Pope that ended papal rule, but the change of public opinion, encouraged by the Reformers; and the emergence of a virile Protestantism. The martyrs who, under papal rule had been publicly denounced, were now, under the beneficent leadership of the Reformers, honoured and extolled;

memorials were erected to their memory and, as the language of the fifth seal's disclosure declared—"white robes" were now given to them to replace the ignominy and shame heaped upon them for so long by their papal persecutors.

Under the sixth seal, the first signs of our Lord's return are specifically mentioned. (See Matthew 24:29.) This "seal" represents the "latter days" or, the days in which we live.

"When he had opened the sixth seal, . . . lo, there was a great earthquake; the sun became black . . . and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." Rev. 6:12, 13.

NOTE.—The earthquake referred to is understood to be that of Lisbon, in Portugal, in November 1755. The supernatural darkening of sun and moon which occurred in May, 1780, was not occasioned by an eclipse and was undoubtedly the second of the prophetic portents. The third was the historic star shower in November, 1833.

The last seal—the seventh—is not yet fulfilled. Its opening will bring the day of triumph for the cause of righteousness. For the fulfilment of this great event, we are now waiting, as the forces of evil and the opposition grow more strident and more challenging than at any previous period of history.

"When he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." Rev. 8:1.

NOTE.—Not only does the "seventh seal" assure us of the silencing of all evil voices and forces, but could also refer to the emptying of heaven when, all the angels accompany Jesus on His triumphal return.

Tilting at the Ten Commandments

(Continued from page 5.)

cisms are factually inaccurate and logically unsound.

In the first place, in saying that the commandments are Jewish and not Christian, Mr. Wilkins contradicts Christ Himself, who declared, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law: . . . I am come not to destroy, but to fulfil." Matt. 5:17. He also contradicts Paul who asked the question, "Do we then make void the law through faith?" and answered it with the categorical assertion, "God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Rom. 3:31.

Secondly, in arguing that the negative form in which the Ten Commandments are couched is out of harmony with Christ's positive precept of love, he reveals how superficial has been his study of the true nature of law, whether human or divine.

It was the seventeenth-century English philosopher, John Locke who declared of secular laws that they

provide directions for man's "proper interests" and "general good" and that since such laws "hedge us from bogs and precipices" they "ill deserve the name of confinement."

Jeremy Bentham, in the eighteenth century, similarly stated that inevitably "every law is an infraction of liberty" because the fundamental purpose of law is to steer men away from doing evil into an area where they will be free to do good.

Sir Isaiah Berlin, Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford in his lecture, "Two Conceptions of Liberty" a year or two ago, went so far as to assert that this conception of law, which he defined as "negative liberty," is the very basis upon which European liberalism and democracy have been built up.

The greatest modern thinkers, therefore, on the subject of law and liberty have done no more than think God's thoughts after Him and have closely followed the comprehensive pattern which He set when, in the Ten Commandments, He set up a "hedge" of moral precepts to warn man against wandering along paths inimical to his temporal and eternal welfare. Within this "hedge" man is given liberty to move and act freely and safely without fear of severing his relations with his Maker or impairing his own or the free development of his fellow men.

In the New Testament, therefore, where the Ten Commandments are not discarded but re-emphasized, it is pointed out that this apparently "negative" law is in reality a positive "law of liberty" (James 2:12), because it most clearly defines the area of experience within which men may freely and safely "live, and move, and have their being." And in a world which is characterized as never before by dishonesty, falsehood, violence, the breakdown of family relationships, moral depravity, and the worship of the "creature rather than the Creator" the "hedge" of God's commandments was never more needed.

The loose thinking which Mr. Wilkins reveals in his general criticism of the Ten Commandments is equally evident when he comes to a consideration of particular commandments.

Take, for example, his remarks about the Fourth Commandment. "Since the resurrection was on a Sunday," he says, "the Christian church has observed Sunday as a holy day and not the Sabbath, which is on a Saturday." Consequently, he argues, the Fourth Commandment, which ordains the seventh day, "does not apply" any longer. But surely that is the very antithesis of a proper attitude toward law. If custom were habitually allowed to invalidate law there very soon would be no laws left. The purpose of a law is to expose divergence from it and lead the law-breaker back into conformity with it. And it is because a very large number of Christian people, unlike Mr. Wilkins, do take the Fourth Command-

ment seriously that they feel they should observe the seventh-day Sabbath which God ordained rather than follow a custom, however ancient, for which there is no biblical support whatsoever.

The fact is that the more we study the form and content of the commandments of the Decalogue the more we realize that, far from being inapplicable today, they always have been and will remain to the end of time the supreme divinely-given guide to living which we neglect at our temporal and eternal peril.

Why I Believe in God

(Continued from page 15.)

of anatomy and physiology we possess today, could say, "I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Psa. 139:14. How much more do we stand in awe of the divine Fashioner of the complex organism of man.

Dr. Keyser also calls our attention to the moral argument for the existence of God. It is evident to the reflective mind that there is moral force and law operating in our world. From the Greek dramatists down to our times, thinkers and poets have realized that while evil temporarily prospers, ultimately good is triumphant. The seeds of destruction are sown in every evil deed and many nations that have forgotten God have been brought low. Solomon expressed this moral principle in the memorable words, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to peoples." Prov. 14:34, R.V., margin.

It was in these terms that Moses made his stirring appeal to Israel: "Behold I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the midst of the land whither ye go in to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples. . . . Unto thee it was showed that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God." Deut. 4:5, 6, 35, R.V.

Why all these Wonders?

(Continued from page 17.)

So startling indeed is this realization that we would do well to pursue it a little further.

When Jesus was talking to His disciples about the outworking of His purpose of salvation in the earth, He said, "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." Matt. 24:14. Before the end of all things comes, a mighty work has to be done. The world has to have a final opportunity to accept the salvation freely offered to all through Christ Jesus. But this world-wide Gospel proclamation would be quite impossible without modern means of transportation for the messengers

of salvation to penetrate to earth's remotest bounds. So as the time of the end came, God stimulated the inventive genius of man to provide railway trains, steamships, motor cars, aeroplanes, radio, and television that His servants might proclaim the good news of salvation to all ere the end should come that not one should perish unwarned when God brings this world to an end to make way for His eternal kingdom.

Here, then, is the real reason for the golden age of history. God gave man knowledge that His saving message might be proclaimed to the ends of the earth, but sinful man, prompted by Satan, has largely prostituted that knowledge to his own material advantage, and his own selfish purposes, with the disastrous results which we now see all around us.

So today while a loving heavenly Father is leaving no stone unturned to save men from the destruction to come, Satan, the adversary of God and of man is equally busy trying to render that proffered salvation of no effect!

The wonders of this age, have, on the one hand made the world-wide Gospel proclamation possible, while the threatenings of annihilation are the result of Satan's attempt to encompass man's eternal damnation.

But while Bible prophecy and world conditions around us unite to declare in clarion tones that we are living near the end of time, and that, humanly speaking, the future is hopeless, Bible prophecy also tells us that the very end which men dread will actually inaugurate the beginning of the divine Utopia and the eternal age.

Without doubt it was these very conditions in this time of the end which led Jesus to say, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. 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. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3.

Yes, Jesus is coming again, not in some future, remote age, but when the time of the end climaxes in the end of time. The vital, urgent question for you, therefore, dear reader, is, "Are you, too, preparing for the soon-coming day? Will you be ready to enter triumphantly into the coming Utopia of God as a result of putting your trust in the saving blood of Jesus, and seeking with all your heart to live by the light of His divine Example? Or will the coming of Jesus find you preoccupied with the pleasures and worries of the world—totally unprepared for that day?

As God planned, the Gospel is now going to earth's remotest bounds. Soon its work will be done in the world, and Jesus will come. Again, therefore, we urge the all-important question, Is the Gospel doing its work in your heart? Are you earnestly,

eagerly responding to its call? There is a way out of the enigma of this age, and that way is found in Christ Jesus. Won't you take that way, the only way, now, that happiness here and in eternity may be yours?

Immortality or Resurrection?

(Continued from page 22.)

they write about them, one would think it a common Bible term, instead of the creation of Platonic philosophy!

As Brunner says: "There can be no doubt at all today that the Bible does not contain this idea of a metaphysical immortality grounded in the essence of the soul."

The main "error of [Platonic] Idealism" Brunner very truly asserts is that "it attributes eternal being substantially, naturally, or essentially to man as the manner of his spiritual being, that it regards eternity as something which can be taken for granted, as a part of the spiritual being of man, as the result of his divine kind of being."

This is just it. Platonic philosophy glorifies man. It makes man something in and of himself. He is possessed with an immortal nature. He is like God. He is, in fact deified. But this is entirely contrary to Bible teaching which categorically asserts that man is not immortal by nature. Man was made conditionally immortal. If he fulfilled the divinely declared conditions, God would bestow upon him immortality. True, as Brunner says, "Originally—so the Bible tells us—man was not destined for death but eternal being. Death is something foreign to his original destiny in the creation." But man's immortality was conditional upon his obedience to God, and so was to be conditionally received from God. When man broke the conditions, he lost the immortality granted under those conditions. In consequence the tree of life, which was to have been the means to perpetuate man's life, was barred to him. An angel, with a flaming sword, was sent to guard the way to the tree of life lest man should put forth his hands and partake of that tree and live for ever. So man could not keep on partaking of it, and so receive immortality.

Thus it is that the Scriptures make it clear that if ever man is to gain immortality he must receive it as a gift from God. And this, the Bible reveals, man can do. Jesus Christ, the God-man is revealed in the Bible as the Life-giver. He has brought "life and immortality to light through the Gospel." 2 Tim. 1:10. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom 6:23. But on the other hand, "he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life," "but the wrath of God abideth on him." 1 John 5:12; John 3:36.

This life given through Christ, the Bible declares, is not bestowed upon man at death but at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory, for then it is that the blessed dead will come forth from their graves, wherein they have peacefully slept, at the loud call of the Life-giver. And so the words of Jesus will be fulfilled: "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life." John 5:28, 29. It is even as Paul declared: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." 1 Cor. 15:51-53.

And so the truth is that no man possesses an inherently immortal soul. No man is inherently immortal, for God "only hath immortality." 1 Tim. 6:16. But it is Christ's prerogative, through His redeeming sacrifice, to give to His sheep eternal life, so that none of them shall perish. (John 10.) All Christians therefore are exhorted to wait with patience for the "adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Rom. 8:23. "Precious," indeed, "in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Psa. 116:15. Not one of them shall ever be lost!

How the Sabbath was Lost

(Continued from page 24.)

munication for "Judaizing," exhorting at the same time that Christians should rest on Sunday "if they can."

Thus, the new day continued its process of progressive usurpation. The decrees of councils became ever more stringent: the Second Council of Maçon (A.D. 585) desired Christians to spend the whole day in prayer; the prohibition of any activity (except for the taking of food) but prayer, was the ordinance of Theodulf, bishop of Orleans; the Third Council of Tours ordered that prayer and praise were to last till the evening. All these authorities realized the implications of their actions: they were establishing a day by human authority. Addis and Arnold declare:

"In all these authorities and in the Fathers generally there is no confusion of Sunday and Sabbath. References to the Decalogue as in any sense the warrant for Sunday are extremely rare, though Chrysostom ("Gen." Hom.X.7, PG,liii.89) deduces this much from God's blessing and hallowing the seventh day, viz., that one day in the week should be given to God's service."—Page 765.

At this stage and also persistently during the Middle Ages this new weekly rest day was justified, not by divine authority, but only by the custom of the church and apostolic tradition. (Addis and Arnold, page 766.)

But the obligation of the true Sabbath cannot be evaded. It is not merely a matter of ceremonial: it is an essential part of God's plan for the spiritual sustenance of His children. The observance of just any day in seven is no valid substitute, for the divine rest was blessed and sanctified, i.e., made mystically different and superior to any other rest, and as such is a type of the rest in store for the redeemed in the heavenly Canaan.

The new day lacked the divine blessing even though it had much conciliar, episcopal, and ecclesiastical approval. Gradually, therefore, a new attitude grew up, the attitude that admits the moral quality of the Sabbath day and seeks to equate the changeling Sunday with it. "This principle is accepted by modern theologians, so far at least that they distinguish between the *ceremonial* part of the third commandment (fourth in the A.V.), which enjoins rest on the seventh day, and its *moral* part, which urges us to consecrate part of our time to heavenly thoughts."—Addis and Arnold, page 766. (Italics supplied.)

This new attitude, persisting to this day, led to the attempt to identify Sabbath and Sunday, an attempt more remarkable for its casuistry, ingenuity, and speciousness than for its convincing power and spiritual success.

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pages

The Whispering Star

or Crumpity's Christmas

By Muriel M. Howard

CRUMPITY was a little old owl. If you had seen him blinking away on his bough in the hills, you could easily have mistaken his down-circled eyes and feather-fluffed chin for the whiskers of Father Christmas himself!

A wise old owl he looked, as he hooted the night away.

Crumpity was a swoop owl, as all owls are, wise in the ways of the nightland, and cruel as could be. He was called Crumpity because



Crumpity, the Owl.

no-one who knew him dare quite pronounce him Grumpity!

Grumpity—oh, I beg your pardon! Let me start this paragraph again!

Crumpity (that's better!)—Crumpity never did a kindly act to the little night folk, in all his life. In spite of the beauty of his soft and downy appearance, he spent his days in drowsing and his nights in destruction.

Except *one night!* This *one night* Crumpity roused himself one eye at a time as he often did. He took one sleepy look at the still more sleepy hillside, and closed his lids. Day had winked back at him. The night mice were still

asleep. Poor little night mice, doomed to an owlish death!

Crumpity turned his head with the neckless sway of a mechanical toy.

He looked down (he often did that), he looked left, he looked right (like a good scout at a roadway crossing), and *then* he looked up! Up into the night-blue sky where clean winds blow.

Crumpity needed a clean wind or two to cleanse his carcass-scattered home!

But this was a *special night* and Crumpity wouldn't kill a thing tonight, not *this night!*

Crumpity looked up again. There was a little light floating in his night-blue sky.

Now, if Crumpity had had only eyes, he might have thought that it was a real star, but his quick ears caught a whispering in the air, and stars just don't whisper, do they? But it really did *look* like a star.

Crumpity spread his great wings and wobbled himself on his sturdy bough. He did that every night, to descend like some silent ghost upon his easy prey. But *this night*, with a swish of his own strong wings, as though fascinated by the radiance, he lifted himself above the sleeping world, above the homestead chimneys and the haystack thatch, and flew straight up to the light, the silver light of his Whispering Star.

It was coming down to meet him. And oh, what a star! Clear and bright and crystal pure, like no other light that had ever beckoned and bewildered him.

Soon Crumpity's star didn't whisper any more. It was rustling like the rustling of his own soft feathers or the falling of the leaves. It was growing, too, larger and lovely and brilliant like some scintillating headlamp of heaven.

Crumpity couldn't see very much

at all now. The light of the lowering Star was blinding his twilight eyes, though they shone in its reflection with "the luminous beauty of a cat's at night." His Whispering Star was a star no longer. It was a dazzling space of whitening splendour which seemed to fill the whole sky as it hung above the gentle hills which were his home.

Crumpity could stand it no more! He must get down away back to his hidden bough, where the dark leaves covered the light. He sank noiselessly beneath his Star, his long "ears" lifted to catch its sound. Its tone was not a whisper now, for it was nearer; not a rustle, but a rushing surge of sweetest muted melody.

Crumpity hovered beneath his Wonder Star. Down below him the sleeping flocks lay silvered by its radiance. Shepherds became shadows, and their fires mere sparks amid that overspreading glow. And the star grew bigger, and its light more bright.

The shepherd men on Crumpity's hillside were looking up, too,

MY THANKS FOR CHRISTMAS

By M. G. Belleini

Thank You, dear God, for Christmas day,
For a lovely time—I'd like to say
A big "Thank You" for all the joy,
The love of friends, and for each toy.

My thanks are not quite finished yet;
The best of all, I must not forget—
Thank You, dear God, for the Babe that lay
Beside His mother on Christmas day.

but they didn't even see Crumpity, though they knew and liked him well. They had seen the light, and the light had troubled them. They forgot even their flocks, so great was their fear of this supernatural "Star," and as they knelt in terror there, they saw the Star draw nearer and take an unusual shape.

Crumpity's "Star" was speaking now, with the voice of an angel from its own angelic form. And the shepherds raised themselves at the quietening music of the angel's words.

"Have no fear," the angel said, "for truly I give you good news of great joy which will be for all the people: for on this day in David's town, a Saviour has been born, who is Christ the Lord.

"And this is the sign to you; you will see a young Child folded in linen, in the place where the cattle have their food."

The shepherds were not afraid any more now. And who can tell the calm and joy of that receding fear! Or sense the heavenly stillness

as God's angels filled the air!

Crumpity was on his own home bough, with his eyes tight shut and his ears wide open. Across the plain there drifted music, sweet, and clear and strong, while the angel choirs of heaven sang their short, exultant song: "Glory to God in the highest, and upon the earth peace, good-will toward men."

Just that—and they were gone! Back away up to the throne of God where angels ever sing.

But there was music in the hearts of the shepherd men now. Not fear any more.

"Let us go now . . . and see this thing which is come to pass which the Lord has made known unto us," they said. "Let us go to Bethlehem. Let us look for the sign which the angel said."

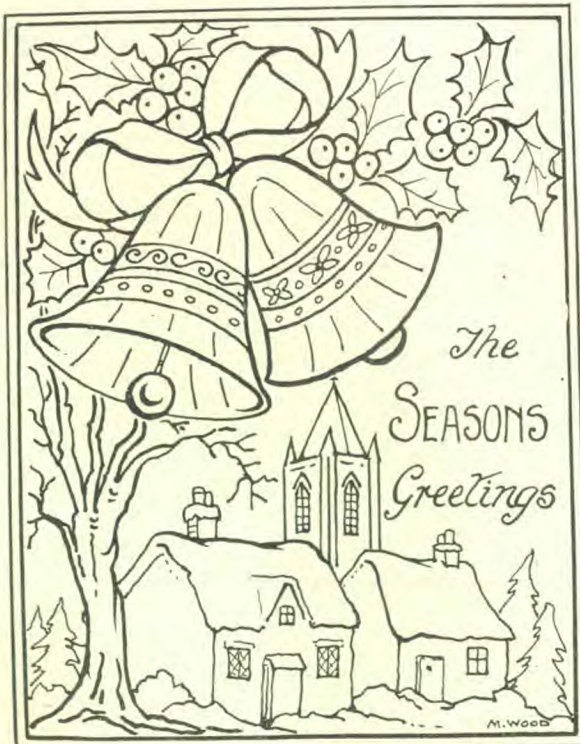
Leaving their sheep in the Great Shepherd's care, they hurried away over the hills. At Bethlehem the angel had said He would be. At Bethlehem in a manger. They did not stop to argue about it all. They knew that was the right place. The angel had said so. They did not stay to consider why so powerful a Person should have so lowly a bed. They hurried to see what they believed would be there.

And there He was! Sweet and small and innocent, the Prince of heaven in a cow's feeding place, resting on the scented hay!

Happily they worshipped Him. Lovingly they watched His newborn breaths. Carefully they fixed upon the mirror of their minds this blessed, humble scene. And then they went away. Mother Mary was still there with that precious Baby Boy; and Joseph was there, too, to cherish and direct them both. But the shepherds went on, over the hills, down through the plains, into many a friendly home, and wherever they went they told the wondrous story of a Baby born to be King of all who love Him well.

And Crumpity? Oh, well, who knows, maybe Crumpity's cousin drowsed above that manger bed. And maybe one day he told Crumpity all about it.

Anyway, any boy who loves Jesus can never be called Grumpity, can he? And any girl who loves Him is ever kind.



See how nicely you can colour this picture and send it with your name, age, and address to Auntie Pam, The Stanborough Press Ltd., Watford, Herts., not later than January 10th. [Please do not paste your pictures on stiff card as the best entries are mounted in our special collection of paintings which you can see if you visit us!]



Cherry Tree Farm

By Ronald James

"I SAW an enormous crow when I was passing the old quarry," said Kay to her brother Tim.

"What do you mean—an enormous crow?" inquired Tim scornfully. "A full grown crow is about twenty inches long."

"Well, this one was ever so much bigger," Kay insisted.

"Better tell old Sam to keep the cows in the shed, in case your precious crow carries one off," suggested Tim with heavy sarcasm.

"You're only jealous because you didn't see it," retorted Kay, angrily.

"Rot! I've seen lots of crows," replied her brother.

"Not like this one though," answered Kay, spiritedly.

"Well, we'll go for a walk by the old quarry and see if your crow is about. Perhaps it'll turn out to be a roc," teased Tim.

The children put on their winter coats, and set out for the quarry. They saw several rabbits and a grey squirrel, but of crows not a sign, big or otherwise.

"Better turn back now, not much daylight left," said Tim.

"What a pity though; I did so want you to see it," sighed Kay.

A sudden harsh cry came to their ears.

"There it is!" shrieked Kay, as a huge black bird flapped up from a distant field. "Now do you believe me?" she asked in triumph.

"Great Scot! that wasn't a crow," said her brother in awe-stricken tones. "It was a raven."

All the way back to the farm the children could talk of nothing else.

"Dad, there's a raven about the old quarry," Tim told his father that evening. "Kay thought it was a big crow. Little donkey!" he added.

"Well, a raven is a crow, Tim," laughed Farmer Jones. "When you refer to a crow you probably think of a carrion crow; but actually ravens, rooks, magpies, jackdaws, and jays are all members of the crow family."

"Now who is a donkey?" asked Kay in delight.

But Tim was much too pleased at the idea of ravens in the district to mind Kay.

"Isn't it smashing!" he gloated. "I hope they nest there."

"Well, I don't," replied his father. "Ravens are magnificent birds, but I'd prefer them to nest further afield. They are apt to take too close an interest in young lambs and chickens for my liking."



Your Letter

My dear Sunbeams,

A FEW days ago, as I was looking at some Christmas cards, I saw one which particularly arrested my attention.

It was a Christmas card with a difference. There was the usual tree laden with good things, and a bright fire blazing in the grate of a cheerful room, but, peeping in at the doorway, was a little boy, ragged and thin, and holding in his hand an empty bowl.

When I turned the picture over, I found that the boy represented one of the needy refugee children, and the card was a reminder to people everywhere to spare some of their gifts for the boys and girls, and older people, too, who are not so fortunate.

When we are enjoying our Christmas puddings and pies, presents and parties, we should remember that Christmas is really a season set apart

to commemorate the birthday of the Baby Jesus, who came to save the world. I know we would like to show our gratitude to Him; but how can we do this?

Jesus Himself told us when He was on earth, that a kind and good deed which was done for one of His poor children was counted in the sight of Heaven as though it were done for Him. Take your Bible, turn to the New Testament, and read Matthew chapter 25, verses 35-46.

I feel sure that Sunbeams will think of many ways in which they can help others, by kind and generous acts to those who are in need, not only at Christmas, but at all times.

Good-bye for now, Sunbeams. May you have the very best Christmas ever!

Yours affectionately,

Auntie Pam

Results of Competition No. 18.

Prize-winners.—Selwyn Davies, 2 Whitcombe Street, Aberdare, Glam. Age 14; Angela Gooderham, 62 Briarwood Road, Whitton Estate, Lowestoft, Suffolk. Age 9.

Honourable Mention.—Alden Palfrey (Malpas); Claire Frances Knight (Gravesend); Janice Palfrey (Malpas); Stephen Pain (Lincoln); Rosalind Elms (Leeds, 16); Susan Floate (Felixstowe); Anne Dalton (Yelverton); Susan Pain (Lincoln); Maxine Pain (Lincoln); Lyndon Palfrey (Malpas); Margaret Magor (Rickmansworth); Doreen Floate (Felixstowe).

Results of Competition No. 19.

Prize-winner.—Roland Heslop, 16 Bladen Street, Jarrow, Co. Durham. Age 6.

Honourable Mention.—Stella Ruddick (Enfield); Susan Floate (Felixstowe); Joanne Pettidemange (Lowestoft); Andrew Ruddick (Enfield); Alison Hardy (Derby); Janice Palfrey (Newport); Sylvia Floate (Felixstowe); Lyndon Palfrey (Malpas); Brian Palfrey (Malpas); Doreen Floate (Felixstowe); Susan Hay (Rickmansworth); Gillian Foster (Plymouth); Marina Hand (Carlton).

Results of Competition No. 20.

Prize-winners.—Jean Winter, 30 Allens Road, Enfield, Middx. Age 12; Stella Ruddick, 88 Kempe Road, Enfield, Middx. Age 10.

Honourable Mention.—Judith Elias (Cardiff); Doreen Floate (Felixstowe); David Ballantyne (Acomb); Susan Floate (Felixstowe); Brian Palfrey (Malpas); Andrew Ruddick (Enfield); Sylvia Floate (Felixstowe); Janice Palfrey (Malpas).

Those who tried hard.—Joanne Pettidemange (Lowestoft); Anne-Marie Kaczmarek (Sandhurst); Rita McCorkell (Potters Green); David Roberts (Norwich); Marjorie Henry (Brixton Hill); Noel McCarthy (Helens Bay); Sylvia Andrews (Abbots Langley); Lyndon Palfrey (Malpas).

MIRROR



of

OUR TIME

Significance of the Incarnation

"MOST people," says the *Times Literary Supplement*, "no longer see the Incarnation as 'the point of intersection of the timeless with time.' It still has its significance in dogma, but, for the world outside the faith, the Nativity has declined into little more than a cosy and sentimental image of the Happy Family."

Explosive book

SPEAKING in the special session of the General Assembly commemorating the fourth centenary of the Reformation in Scotland, Sir Thomas Taylor, principal of Aberdeen University, declared: "The Bible is an explosive book when it gets into men's hands and is taken seriously. Look what happened at the Reformation all over Europe."

Pagan psychiatry inadequate

"PAGAN psychiatry," asserts Dr. E. Stanley Jones, in his new book, *Conversion*, "is showing itself more and more inadequate to deal with the disrupted in any thoroughgoing way."

Unity by conversion

IT is significant that the Vatican's new Secretariat for Christian unity has been given headquarters in the Palazzo dei Convertendi in Rome. A wall inscription describes the building given by Cardinal Castaldi in 1685 as "a hospice for those who have returned from heresy."

Destructive potential of Polaris

COMMENTING in the *Sunday Times* on the destructive potential of the Polaris submarine, with its sixteen missiles carrying megaton warheads, David Divine says: "Two Polaris submarines firing on a target plan that a child could devise could eliminate more than three-fifths of the human life in Britain in a quarter of an hour."

Intellectronics

DR. SIMON RAMO has invented the term "intellectronics" for "the extension of the human intellect by electronics." This, he asserts, "will become our greatest occupation within a decade."

Grim truth

PREACHING in St. Paul's Cathedral, the Dean, Dr. W. R. Matthews, said, "The grim truth is that any major war in this scientific age, even without nuclear weapons, would probably bring our civilization to an end."

Orthodox unity

A PAN-ORTHODOX Council will probably convene later in 1961 to discuss the reunion of the various branches of the Orthodox church. To prepare for this a preliminary meeting will be held on the island of Rhodes next Easter.

Biggest "gap"

ADDRESSING a Management Conference in Harrogate, Sir John Hunt declared: "I believe that perhaps the most serious 'gap' of all in our divided society is between the adult and the adolescent. It is, unfortunately, a growing 'gap,' which makes the problem still more urgent and serious."

Decline in cinema going

"IN 1952," says the *Economist*, "the average Briton visited the cinema more than once a fortnight, in 1959 less than once a month."

"Look up"

MOST appropriate is the slogan chosen by the Bishop of Croydon for his diocese-wide campaign. For did not Jesus say to those who would see the signs of the climactic days of human history: "When these things begin to come to pass, then *look up*, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh"?



take his word



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