

Georgetown Herald

A THOMSON NEWSPAPERS LIMITED PUBLICATION

Serving the communities of Georgetown, Glen Williams, Norval, Linthouse, Hornby, Stewarttown, Ballinacred, Ashgrove, Terra Cotta.

PAGE 4 THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22nd, 1960

EDITORIAL COMMENT

A Christmas Editorial

Humility — Love — Hope

Written by Loyal Phillips of The St. Petersburg (Florida) Independent

The spirit of peace and goodwill that has ever-shone on Christmas Eve as a result of the birth of a Child, a manger 2,000 years ago.

Today we are once again experiencing the magic of a miracle.

Gay ribbons and bright tinsel will be laid aside for an interval while Christians everywhere pause to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas.

Once every year, under the spell of a few hallowed hours, men become brothers. It seems to happen automatically, without effort; smiles replace frowns, hope replaces despair, humility replaces arrogance, and love replaces indifference and even hate.

What works this miracle which for so many centuries has inspired people, sermons, music and works of art? What accounts for such a special day whose glory extends even beyond Christianity and brings together one-third of the peoples of the earth? The answer lies in the fact that mankind, during these magic moments, is caught up in the rapture of the Christmas spirit as the Nativity Story again unfolds its sacred message.

All the world is watching again today, and listening for the words of the angel choir which brought "good tidings of great joy" and a promise of peace to men of good will. From the winter-darkened top of the world where Americans and Canadians mark the Early Warning Radar Line, to the tips of Africa and South America, Christians are together Christmas Eve in thought. As though bewitched and led by a supernatural force, men turn from pressures and animosities to friendliness and compassion.

Let us then stand aside from the gaiety and withdraw as did the shepherds to reflect on the reason for Christmas and what it is supposed to mean in our time.

It is strange, of course, that the Master Magician should permit the sacrifice of His Son as a means of revealing Himself and His message to fickle, arrogant and greedy men who rejected Him. Instead of a dazzling monarch in purple robes who would rule with pomp and might, the Son of God came as a naked infant and was born in a stable of ordinary, hard-working parents who were destitute beyond today's comprehension. Instead of a war lord, the Messiah came humbly as a Prince of Peace.

Although it is not for mortals to comprehend or to challenge the miraculous manner in which the Saviour of man came into this world, it is enough to know the purpose of His coming and the heritage He left. The Divine nature of His life changed the course of history and caused it to turn around and flow in a different direction.

To exemplify meekness to a haughty and vain people, He came not with regal trappings of Caesar nor the pomp of Solomon, but swaddled in burlap as a child of poverty. It was not to the high priests nor to the rich loyalists that He first appeared, but to the lowly shepherds. In later years, to teach humility, He washed the feet of His disciples, much to the consternation and shagrin of the mighty.

a lost world which lived by force and greed; He gave His life to open mankind's eyes to an entirely new concept of love. To replace the Mosaic rule of "an eye for an eye," He gave us the Golden Rule. In an era of paganism, slavery and despair, the Messiah brought into the world a new dynamic which changes human relationships. Instead of exploitation, He taught brotherhood and respect for human rights. By extending good will toward all men, He was and is the pioneer of a new age. Through His birth as a gift to the world, through His self-sacrifice as a sacrifice for the sins of all men, the banner gave new hope to whosoever will accept Him and adopt His plan of life.

As we review the highlights involving the birth in Bethlehem and the teachings of the Nazarene we conclude that the great heritage for Twentieth Century mankind might well be humility, love and hope.

Basically, the Christ Child released into the universe a compassionate love which cradles a tired world in its arms and dispels the "me first" philosophy of the Dark Ages. Thoughtfulness of others, the basic precept, has given to society its finest institutions, including our agencies of mercy and our citadels of enlightenment. Christmas is the full sway of love, as Santa is the embodiment of generosity. While life could not continue without romantic love and love of country, we are reminded today that only love of mankind is lasting and eternal. It touches and softens hearts, it sweetens and purifies thoughts, and it ennobles and exalts as it leads to Christmas-giving the sentiment of Divine Philanthropy.

There is no conflict between the timeless Nativity Story and our present-day Santa Claus who reigns as the grand monarch of the festive season in a beautiful world of make-believe. We cannot be young again, but so long as there is a Santa, the frost of time will never deaden in adults the magic, mystic love so aptly represented in the packages around the Christmas tree. Santa's packages carry no price tags and reflect unquestioned devotion, just as the Divine Father gave His Son to the world as a gift of love unlimited.

The Christmas Story represents God's love in action, and it was for all people and still is. It is for the little child and the hardened sinner, the king and the peasant, the weak and the strong. Were there no Christmas Story, there would be no civilization. The world would be like a garden whose owner had left it for the weeds. Dark despair would roll over the soul of man.

But the manger serves as a fountainhead from whence has come a code of brotherhood which will some day be adopted by all man and nations. Then there will be no cause for friction, fear or war. Mistakes will be forgotten, misgivings banished forever in the beautiful glow of peace on earth.

As the Star of Bethlehem guided the Magi to the manger long ago, it is our prayer that the spiritual meaning of this crowning moment will guide you our readers to greater love and happiness.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!



GIFT WRAPPED

Sugar and Spice

Approved by BILL SMITH

Another Christmas is upon us. And we're acting as though it were a fearsome monster, advancing to engulf us. From all sides come the annual lamentations and lachrymations of the spell sports. Most of them are, in or near, middle age. At every turn, they bewail the "commercialization" of our modern Christmas, and wonder plaintively "what's happened to the good, old-fashioned Christmas?"

I can tell them. The same thing has happened to the good old-fashioned Christmas that has happened to the good old horse and buggy and the good old Saturday night bath in a tin tub in the kitchen and the good old two hour sermon on Sunday morning.

Most of the people who do the weeping about our manner of celebrating the occasion today would have to be tied, hand and foot, before they could be dragged back through the years to their good old-fashioned Christmas. Because it wasn't all that good.

What they think they remember as "good old-fashioned Christmas" is a nostalgic dream they have concocted out of vague and distorted memories. They have read and heard, and the tenderness of his manly to deplore today and see yesterday through a rosy haze.

The trouble is they try to convince their children that this phantasy they're describing was infinitely superior to the crass materialistic Christmas of today. I know the story pretty well. Perhaps because I have told it quite a few times.

It goes something like this: "Christmas was a much happier occasion when we were children. You kids, all you can think of is what you're going to get. You don't have any real fun

out of Christmas. The tree, for example, nowadays, we just buy a tree. Why, when we were young we'd all go out to the bush with Dad and cut our own tree. And when we came home Mom would have for soup and home-made bread for us, and we'd have a jolly time decorating the tree." And so on.

This little story is typical of the rest of it, half fact, half fancy. My father, for one, had more sense than to go round-daring around in the bush, up to his waist in snow. He had a much better system. He simply told me to go and get a tree. And I cut it and dragged it 3 miles home and arrived exhausted and half frozen. And my mother decorated it, as mothers have been doing since the first Christmas tree was cut.

Parents of today say they are appalled at the sophisticated greed of their children when it comes to Christmas presents. The kids aren't satisfied with a pair of skates, or a big doll. They want a portable TV set, or bongos drums, or a transistor radio. According to the old-fashioned Christmas' fairy tale, when we were children we accepted with shining eyes and little squeals of appreciation anything that we found under the tree.

Well, I am here to tell you that this is pure piffle and poppycock. Greed is relative. I coveted a pair of real hockey skates as furiously as my son covets a tape recorder. And if my eyes were shining when the new skates turned out to be a new suit of long underwear, it was because there were tears in them.

Another hallucination about the good, old-fashioned Christmas is that gift-giving was much more simple for parents in those days. I disagree. One Christmas I eavesdropped on my parents as they talked about presents for their five children. It was during the depression, and the conversation was heartbreaking, even for a fairly tough ten-year-old. They were deep in despair because there was no money for gifts.

It's true that today's Christmas has attracted some undesirable features: too much advertising, too many phony Santas, too many Christmas songs, dinned at us for too many hours each day, too much eating and drinking. But it's equally true that today's Christmas retains the best things of the old spirit of Christmas.

Our ears throb and our stomachs heave at such musical abortions as Jingle Hell Rock, but Good King Wenceslas is still with us, and I'm dreaming of a White Christmas shows no sign of pushing Silent Night into oblivion.

We spend far too much on gifts and cards. But we still shop with the idea that it is more blessed, as well as more fun, to give than to receive. And every time we send a card, we are sending a little piece of ourselves, and there is a moment of warmth and pleasure for the recipient, when he

BE SAFE

Make Christmas A Happy Time

Christmas is a time for feasting and joy throughout the land. And it is a time of sadness and tragedy for hundreds of thousands of carelessness.

Every Christmas lives are lost or ruined by careless accidents. Some occur from falls while putting up decorations, or burns while cooking, or fires in the home. But the greatest toll takes place on the nation's highways.

Traffic accidents on both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are about twice as high as the annual daily average.

Early darkness plus bad weather adds up to poor visibility. Fogged windshields also make it difficult to see and avoid hood-end situations. Rain, snow and ice mean slippery streets and highways, but thousands of build-up drivers fail to adjust to these hazardous conditions.

Loss of lives in home fires is always greater at Christmas time because of decorations and Christmas trees.

Some Tips

1. A small tree can be just as pretty as a large one and is less of a hazard.
2. Stand the tree in water to retard drying and set it up in the coolest part of the room.
3. Don't set up the electric trim near the tree.
4. Use waterproof decoration of glass and metal.
5. Check lights for defective wiring.
6. Discard gift wrapping immediately.
7. Don't leave lights burning on the tree when away from home and inspect it often to see whether it is drying out.
8. Discard the tree when the needles start to fall.



RAISED IN SONG: Young voices, raised to a chorus of Christmas hymns, this is one of the memorable moments of every Christmas. And when the sounds of "Silent Night" fill the silence of a mighty church, there comes within every heart the urge to sing out with happiness and joy.

dispensing warm love. For underneath the bellyache and the bad taste, Christmas is still a time for joy and love, for giving for sentimentality, for renewing our faith in the miracle of Bethlehem.

Out with gloom and carping. I'm going to do my very best to have a Merry Christmas. And for all the readers of Sugar & Spice I want the same. Even the crabs.

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THERE IS A Santa Claus



"Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus."

This famous editorial reply to the pleading, almost tearful inquiry of a young girl, "Is there really a Santa Claus?" is some meaning and purpose, albeit not completely understood, to those too young to comprehend the true meaning and purpose of Christmas.

There is, indeed, a Santa Claus, and he is real — as real as we can expect him to be. And he continues to exist because there is a real need for him.

AT CHRISTMAS

Thousands Visit Holy Land

Jerusalem and the Holy Land at this time of the year attracts thousands of Christians from throughout the world. They come by every means of transportation to visit the shrines and Holy places so important to the Christian world.

In Bethlehem they find the Church of the Nativity, traditional scene of the birth of Christ, which is cared for by monks of many sects.

From the Mount of Olives, where Jesus prayed and wept over Jerusalem, visitors can see the great beauty of the Holy City and the great wall that Herod built. Beyond it is the Dome of the Rock which tradition says marks the place where Solomon built his temple and Jeremiah hid the Ark of the Covenant.

The Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prayed the night before he was killed. Some of the olive trees are said to date from the time of Christ's entry into the Holy City. The garden is cared for today by Franciscan fathers.

The tomb of Mary, mother of Christ, is near here and attracts many pilgrims.

Visitors to Jerusalem today can not enter by the Golden Gate. It has been blocked and they must use the Dung Gate which leads into the North African Quarter.

The Holy Place From inside this gate one can see the holiest places in Christianity — the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, erected over the place where Christ was crucified and buried.

It was completed in the twelfth century by the Crusaders and many different Christian orders have altars here.

One of the many traditions of the church is that the keys are kept by a Muslim of the family of Nuzalibeh. This custom has been in practice since the time of Saladin, who was Sultan of Egypt and Syria from 1174 to 1193.

Supposedly by letting the family of Nuzalibeh keep the keys to the church it will keep peace among the many Christian sects.

There are but a few of the many shrines and Holy places that have attracted millions of pilgrims throughout the centuries and will continue to do so for centuries to come.