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CONTENTS

DECEMBER, 1957

	Page
"DON'T MISS CHRISTMAS" — <i>Principal E. L. Simmonds, M.A., B.D.</i>	1
CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE	4
THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN THE GREEK — <i>Rev. J. Honeyman, B.A., B.D., M.Th.</i>	5
THE FIELDS OF BETHLEHEM — <i>Rev. D. E. Raymer, B.A.Sc., B.D.</i>	9
THE CHRISTMAS OF CHURCH HISTORY — <i>Rev. T. R. Maxwell, M.A., M.Th.</i>	13
OUR ALUMNI FELLOWSHIP — <i>Mr. A. M. Deans, M.C.</i>	19
"WHY I WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS" — <i>Edward Boom, Student President</i>	22
THE NEW YEAR CAN BE HAPPY TOO! — <i>Beth Huddleston, R.N., Student Co-President</i>	24
ALUMNI NEWS	27

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SPECIAL CHRISTMAS ISSUE





DON'T MISS CHRISTMAS



PRINCIPAL E. L. SIMMONDS, M.A., B.D.

HOW COULD ANYONE MISS Christmas! The idea seems ridiculous, and yet, if we read the Bible record of the first Christmas, we shall find that there were some people who did miss Christmas and there were others who almost missed it.

One of those who almost missed Christmas was *JOSEPH*, the carpenter of Nazareth. Matthew, writing of the birth of Jesus, says, "His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph" (1:18). Commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew tell us what "espoused" meant in the days of our Lord Jesus Christ. Albert Barnes has a note: "*Espoused*—Betrothed or engaged to be married. There was commonly an interval of ten or twelve months among the Jews between the contract of marriage and the celebration of the nuptials . . . yet such

was the nature of this engagement, that unfaithfulness to each other was deemed adultery." Richard Glover comments: "*Espoused*—more than what is termed with us "engaged." The betrothal was a formal, public ceremony—not reversible except by a divorce, though not followed immediately by the occupancy of the same abode." The couple were regarded, from the day of their engagement, as man and wife, hence Matthew speaks of "Joseph her husband" (1:19), "Mary thy wife" (1:20).

During the period of the engagement of Mary and Joseph, "before they came together", Mary "was found with child" (Matt. 1:18). A reverent imagination will be able to realize something of the agony of soul that Joseph experienced when this news became known.

There were two courses of action open to him, "being a just man" (Matt. 1:19), that is, a man who lived according to the Jewish law. The first was to accuse her openly, proceed with a trial, and thus expose her publicly as an unfaithful woman. The other was "to put her away privately", to write her a bill of divorcement, without specifying the reason and thus, though having nothing more to do with her, sparing her from public shame. Joseph, though deeply hurt and, as he felt, grievously wronged, was a kindly man and he decided on the latter course.

"But while he thought on these things", doubtless in the presence of God, in prayer, he received an astounding message from God: "fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. 1:20). Joseph was close to missing Christmas: had he put Mary away he would have missed it. The thing that kept him from missing Christmas was a thorough-going, whole-hearted belief in the word of God, a word that told him of the Incarnation, God's personal intervention in human history, a fact transcending human reason. Joseph believed, the first man to believe in the Virgin Birth, and thus he did not miss Christmas.

We leave Joseph for *THE THREE WISE MEN*. They were

men of faith. They believed that the star which they had seen was the one of Balaam's prophecy:

"there shall come a Star out of Jacob
and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Num. 24:17).

They were men of action. They followed the star, travelling a considerable distance at cost of ease and of money, but when they came to Israel they forsook the star, turning aside to get guidance and help from King Herod. In his palace in Jerusalem they almost missed Christmas. There was no one there to help them and, if Herod's wise men had not turned them back to the Word of God, they would have missed Christmas.

God's word, however, put them again upon the right road and, as they followed its direction, the neglected star took them to the very spot "where the young Child was" (Matt. 2:9). "When they were come into the house, they saw the young Child . . . and fell down and worshipped Him (Matt. 2:11). Their faith in God's word, their own personal discovery of the Saviour, their prostrate worship before Him, show that they did not miss Christmas.

When the Wise Men were in Jerusalem they met "all *THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES*" (Matt. 2:4). These men knew the

word of God and, in answer to Herod's question as to "where Christ should be born" they reply, without a moment's hesitation, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet". These men knew more about Christ, more about the word of God than the wise men, but they missed Christmas. They were content to know *about* Christ without knowing Him personally. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

There is a great contrast between these religious leaders and *THE BETHLEHEM SHEPHERDS*. These latter, like Joseph, received word about Christmas direct from above. They knew as much about it, in a somewhat different way, as the chief priests and scribes. Had they been content with mere knowledge they, too, would have missed Christmas. As it was, they added action to their knowledge: "The shepherds said, one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see" (Luke 2:15). "And they came with haste and found". There were no doubts, no questionings, no hesitancy: they acted upon what they knew — and they did not miss Christmas.

One other character is brought before us in the Christmas story. We saw earlier that the scribes and Pharisees missed Christmas. They knew all about it but were apparently quite indifferent to the whole matter — and so they missed

Christmas. *HEROD*, on the contrary, was far from indifferent. He took careful steps to discover all he could about the Child that was to be born. It was his idea to find out from the religious authorities in Jerusalem as to "*where* Christ should be born (Matt. 2:4). He was also concerned to know *when*: he enquired of the wise men "diligently what *time*" (Matt. 2:7). He charged the wise men, furthermore, to bring word back to him after they had found the Child, the reason for his interest being, ostensibly, that he, too, might "worship" (Matt. 2:8). One would imagine that he was quite determined not to miss Christmas. As we know, however, he did, fortunately, miss Christmas and the reasons for his missing it are not hard to find — his actions were right, but his motives were wrong; he was dominated by self-interest.

The Gospels thus show us that a *king, priests, scribes*, all missed Christmas: a *carpenter, shepherds* and *wise men* did not miss Christmas. What is Christmas? The realized presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

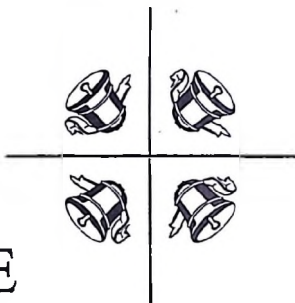
Many will celebrate on December 25th — but they will miss Christmas. We have already seen what things are necessary in order not to miss Christmas — a firm faith in the word of God, a practical expression of that faith in

everyday living, a refusal to be turned aside from God's clear leading, and a readiness to worship the great gift of God's love — Jesus Christ our Saviour.

May God grant to each one of our world-wide Toronto Bible College family not to miss Christmas. May we all realize afresh, under

the illumination of God the Holy Spirit, the meaning of God's gift of His Son to be our Saviour and Master. And may we, as we observe Christmas in the realized presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, be used to bring others, among those for whom He died, to worship at His feet.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE



at the PEOPLES CHURCH, 100 Bloor Street East, Toronto

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19th, 1957, 8 P.M.

*All Students, Alumni and Friends are invited to come
and sing the grand Christmas Carols.*

*Rev. Wm. Crump, Director of Music, will conduct the service,
assisted by the T.B.C. Evangelistic Choir.*

❧ *The Christmas Story in the Greek* ❧



REV. J. HONEYMAN, B.A., B.D., M.TH.

IN ORDER TO APPRECIATE THE deepest significance of the Christmas story as recorded in Luke 2:1-14, one would be strongly advised to view it from the vantage point of the Greek New Testament. Here, as with every other passage of the New Testament, new facets of truth and interest are discovered which the English translations do not reveal.

The record begins (1:1-7) with "the event of universal and eternal significance" (Geldenhuys), i.e., the birth of Jesus, God incarnate in flesh. Then there follows "the charming idyl" (verses 8-14) touched upon by poetic beauty and revelatory content: Eternity has come into time and its coming is attended by supra-natural phenomena.

"And there were in the same country *shepherds*" (poimenes).

The underlying meaning of the verb *poimaino* from which the word *poimenes* is derived is, "I tend because I cherish". This emphasis combines with the poverty and lowliness of the shepherds, to enhance the wondrous fact of the revelation of the Infant Jesus to those who watched the temple flocks which were destined for sacrifice. We remember that He designated Himself "The Good Shepherd", that later He would tend His sheep because He so deeply cherished them, and that He Who was the Shepherd would later become "the Lamb of God — slain". The Dummelow Bible Commentary (p. 742) says: "The flocks at Bethlehem were destined for the Temple sacrifices, and the shepherds who kept them, occupied a higher social position than other shepherds, who were considered

outcast by the scribes because of their necessary isolation from religious ordinances. There was a Jewish tradition that the birth of the Messiah would be proclaimed from the "Migdol Eder", "the tower of the flock", which lay near Bethlehem on the road to Jerusalem (Edersheim).

"*Keeping watch* over their flocks by night". The Greek (phulassontes phulakas) reads "guarding guards" or "watching watches". The idiom really expresses the idea of "a constant and unflinching watch". When we note that the word phulasso "I guard", here refers to "a sincere solicitude for the welfare of the person or object being guarded", we realize more emphatically the analogy between these shepherds and Jesus.

The shepherds had the dual responsibility of caring for the sheep and of protecting them from wild beasts. Again we see the Lord Jesus typified in the work of the shepherds; it was He who said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee".

"And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the *glory* of the Lord shone upon them." The word glory (doxa) is used in the New Testament of the heavenly brightness which surrounds God, and, by which the heavenly beings are surrounded when they appear before men. The doxa is the New Testament

counterpart of the Old Testament Shekinah. It was this doxa which illuminated Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration.

The word clearly suggests the idea of splendour, excellence, magnificence, preeminence in a superlative way. It carries with it also the notion of the honour and praise rightly given to Him who is the Divine Majesty.

In this passage doxa denotes an awe-inspiring manifestation of the Divine presence, "the radiating glory of God's majesty became visible" (Gledenhuis). At Jesus' birth God revealed His glory, the angels sang of His glory and the shepherds saw His glory.

"And they were sore *afraid*." The words "sore afraid (ephobethesan phobon megan) read literally, "they were frightened with a great fear" or "seized with terror". These shepherds were consumed with awe and wonder. They knew that this was the work of God, that something phenomenal was taking place. Indeed, it is highly probable that their thoughts had been of a gracious visitation of God, for, in one sense, all the Jewish people were waiting for the consolation of Israel—why not these humble shepherds? Surely it is reasonable to assume that God would reveal Himself to those who were awaiting His revelation!

Henry Burton (Expositor's Bible—P. 73-74) writes: "They were

devout, God-fearing men. Like their father Jacob, they too were citizens of two worlds; they could lead their flocks into green pastures, and mend the fold; or they could turn aside from flock and fold to wrestle with God's angels, and prevail. Heaven's revelations come to noble minds, as the loftiest peaks are always the first to hail the dawn. And can we suppose that Heaven would so honour them, lighting up the sky with an aureole of glory for their sole benefit, sending this multitude to sing to them a sweet chorale, if the men themselves had nothing heavenly about them, if their selfish, sordid mind could soar no higher than their flocks, and have no wider range than the markets for their wool?"

The angels said unto them, "Fear not", i.e., he addressed himself to their mental anxiety and adds the reason why they should not be afraid, "for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy". The words "I bring you good tidings" are the translation of one Greek word, "euaggelizomai". The "eu" part of it, in its classical use, means "well" or "good", and "aggelizomai" means "I carry a message". Thus the word euaggelizomai means "I carry a good message." From this has come the cognate noun "euaggelion" which is always translated "gospel" in the New Testament. Our English word "gospel" is derived from "gode-spell" (Saxon):

gode means "good" and spell means "story". Thus the angel's announcement to the shepherds was, "I evangelize (derived from euaggelizomai) to you a great joy" (Wyclif) or "I am proclaiming to you good news of great joy", i.e., the kind of good tidings that provides real and abiding joy.

The word joy (chara) denotes a deep-seated inner satisfaction. (Cf. Philippians 1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1.) It is closely related to the Greek words for grace (charis) and thanks (eucharistia).

"Which shall be to all the people". The article with the noun "people" points especially to the people of Israel, although it does not in any way suggest that the Gentiles were to be excluded from the privileges provided through His coming.

"Born this day in the city of David"—the addition of these words, which indicate the birthplace of Christ, makes it clear that the child born in David's city "Bethlehem" is the King of Israel spoken of in Messianic prophecy.

"A Saviour", the underlying meaning of the Greek word for Saviour (soter) is "deliverer" and with this there is the closely related function of "preserver". These two meanings combine effectively to set forth the office of Christ in His redeeming and protecting work on behalf of His own.

The further titles given the newborn Babe are "Christ" (Christos) and "Lord" (Kurios). Here the order of the words and the absence of the article are quite significant. The expression is unique in the New Testament. Two readings are possible: if we take Christos (Christ) as an adjective modifying Kurios (Lord) the phrase should read, "Anointed Lord"; if we understand Christos as a noun in apposition with Kurios then the words would read, "Lord Messiah". Both readings convey meaningful implications. We should note that "Christos" is, properly speaking, an adjective derived from Chrio, "I anoint". However, in the New Testament it is commonly taken as a noun. Jesus is the Anointed One. In the Old Testament "anointing" for office was applied to kings, prophets and priests. "Hence the word "Christ" was eminently representative of our Lord, who united in Himself the offices of king, prophet and priest." (Vincent).

Immediately following his mention of the "sign", i.e., that the Babe would be found "wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger", Luke tells us that the host of angels sang a hymn of praise telling of the nature, the meaning and the results of the unique event.

"Glory to God in the highest", i.e., let all excellence, majesty and power be attributed to the most high God.

"And on earth *peace*"—the word for peace (eirene) is derived from the verb "eiro", "I join" and the implications of the word are obvious: those who are "joined" in spirit, motive and action in Christ cannot remain in a state of disharmony with one another. "A new kind of peace was promised with His coming." (Geldenhuys).

"And goodwill to men" or "among men who are the recipients of His good pleasure". The word "eudokia" is made up of "eu" (well see above), and "dokia" which comes from "dokew", "I think, I seem, I judge", so that the word "eudokia" carries the thought of those whom God judges as being "well" or "good"; such shall receive His gracious favours; the favours which He offers in the Babe of Bethlehem, the Christ of Calvary.

But in Greek, English, or a thousand other tongues, what glorious news it is — "Good tidings of great joy . . . to all people . . . a Saviour, Christ the Lord!"

✿ The Fields of Bethlehem ✿



REV. D. E. RAYMER, B.A.SC., B.D.

THE FIELDS OF BETHLEHEM! With varied emotions the mind of the Christian turns toward these fields, particularly at this season. This is a region forever sacred in the thinking of all whose joy is to remember that over them the angelic choir proclaimed "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."

Occasionally the student of Scripture must bring himself sharply to the realization that the beloved and sacred names of Scripture—Bethlehem, Nazareth, Bethel, are real place-names. Not only may they be located on the modern map, but they may be visited. They are still there today. The little town

of Bethlehem lies just six miles to the south and west of the great capital, Jerusalem. A winding road, joining the two, continues on southward until it reaches the ancient town of Hebron.

The fields of Bethlehem! What were they like on that still night when Mary and Joseph ended their weary three days' journey from Nazareth? Probably the couple had travelled southward along the east bank of the Jordan and had crossed by the fords of Jericho. From the deep gorge of the Jordan the steep upward climb from Jericho to Jerusalem had taxed their endurance. At last, the sight of their destination, Bethlehem, lying astride the back bone of the mountain ridge of Judea, must have brought a sense of rest and peace.

The little town lay surrounded by its own rich fields. The very name is full of meaning. "Bethlehem" is the "House of Bread." Significant is it not, that the birth-place of the "Bread of Life" should have been the "House of Bread"! A great natural amphitheatre leads the travellers ever upward through terraced vineyards and gardens to the cluster of homes on the ridge, twenty-seven hundred feet above sea level.

Alfred Eidersheim, who has written the classic, "Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah" tells us that the green and silver of the foliage of the olive might, even at that season, have mingled with the pale pink of the almond, and with the darker colouring of the opening peach buds. In grim contrast with the natural beauty, Herod's castle perched over there on the highest hill south-east of Bethlehem. It was together a strong fortress, a magnificent palace, and almost a courtier city, a constant reminder of the foreign influence and oppression then dominating the political and social life of Palestine.

II

The fields of Bethlehem are deeply interwoven into the fabric of Old Testament history. As early

as the time of Jacob, they hold the attention of the reader. On these same fields, life's greatest sorrow came to Jacob when his beloved Rachel died. There and then was born his youngest son Benjamin "son of my sorrow." The mourning husband marked the grave with a pillar, and a plain Saracenic mausoleum still locates the traditional site of the ancient burial place. What a contribution to Israel and to the people of God was to be made by the descendants of this same Benjamin, born in Bethlehem's fields. Two men by the name of Saul were to acknowledge Benjamin as their father. The first Saul, chosen by his fellows, was destined to become Israel's first King. The second Saul "of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews" was to be chosen by God Himself as the apostle to the Gentiles. He whose tribal father had been born on the fields of Bethlehem was to become the devoted and willing bond-servant of the Lord Jesus Christ who had stepped out of heaven's glory into human history at this very same Bethlehem Ephratah.

What other names does Bethlehem bring to the mind of the lover of Bible history: Ruth and Boaz, Jesse and David. The splendid fer-

tility of the ancient "House of Bread" depended upon the rain from heaven. Moses had described this land to his followers in the wilderness as "a land of hills and valleys, which drinketh water of the rain of heaven." In event of faithful obedience, the rain would come in due season, but following national disobedience, the rains would fail because God had chosen this peculiarity of climate and topography as a means to chasten, instruct and correct His erring nation.

The little book of Ruth is written as the result of one of the periods of famine which God permitted to come upon the inhabitants of Bethlehem. Ruth the Moabitess is introduced, by her mother-in-law Naomi, "to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest." The remainder of that treasure book is as fine a picture of the providential hand of God working in human affairs, as may be found anywhere. Amongst the reapers with their sickles, and the maidens of Bethlehem, Ruth meets her kinsman. The wealthy Boaz, because he was both a blood relative to the deceased husband of Ruth, and a man with a strong sense of duty, became the willing redeemer of all that pertained to Ruth. The heathen immigrant became the cherished bride

in Israel, and there was born a son "and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David."

III

David the shepherd boy — the residents of Bethlehem were noted shepherds. From the ridge of the backbone of the mountain country of Judah, deep gorges descend westward to the plains of Philistia, and eastward to the Dead Sea. In the days of David, these same gorges provided dens for beasts of prey — the lion and the bear. The shepherds of Bethlehem contended not only with the marauding beasts but with fatigue and hunger and cold. Here David received his shepherd's training and here he learned to know his God. In the quiet solitude of the fields of Bethlehem the lad learned the eternal truth of the shepherd Psalm, "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

David the King — from these same fields into nearby mountain hideouts the Lord led David through many years of harsh experiences to the Kingship. After many troubled years, rest was given to him from all his enemies. Then the Lord revealed an astonishing thing. "Thine house and thy king-

dom shall be established forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever." Overwhelmed, David worshipped. David does not understand; he cannot know that the One in Whom this promise is to be fulfilled will truly be, as Isaiah wrote "a root of Jesse, an ensign to the nations," nor that, at the hour of His birth on these same Bethlehem fields, an angelic choir would one day proclaim "unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."

IV

The fields of Bethlehem! The prophet Micah was the early mouthpiece of revelation who brought Bethlehem into prophetic focus. Micah's day was cast into the same historical period as Isaiah, of whom he was a younger contemporary. Stirring events with tremendous consequences to the people of God were unfolding. A great and a dark shadow from the north in the form of the terrible Assyrian army had descended upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel. After a dread three years' seige Samaria had been taken into captivity, never to return. The very gates of Jerusalem itself, had trembled to the marching divisions of Sennacherib's army. Little Bethlehem had witnessed the ravages of

the cruel, black-bearded Assyrians. Then in the midst of it all, God spoke. "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting."

Out of the gloom, a ray of glorious light; but the hand of God moves slowly upon the clock of time. Seven full centuries, with their tale of captivity and exile, return and poverty, must pass before the fulfilment of this prophecy. But Micah had revealed sufficient for the wise ones of Israel to know where to expect the appearance of the coming deliverer. It was to be in Bethlehem. What they failed to recognize was that this ruler in Israel, while clothed in true humanity, was also true deity. He was the One towards whom all longings and aspirations of prophecy had ever been directed.

Even as the sovereign God worked through prophecy and history and geography to prepare for His coming once, so the same God still moves behind the scenes of time to prepare for the great climatic hour of all history when He shall come whose right it is to reign. Even so come Lord Jesus!

❖ The Christmas of Church History ❖



REV. T. R. MAXWELL, M.A., M.TH.

STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM, Christmas almost didn't happen. Among the scattered believers during the first three centuries of church history the tremendous themes of the cross and resurrection overshadowed that of the birth of Jesus Christ in the thought and life of the people. Moreover, the prevailing custom of birthday festivals for pagan deities led church leaders such as Origen, the most famous of the early Greek Fathers, actively to oppose celebration of Jesus' birth "as if," and the words are Origen's, "He were a Pharaoh."

The mystery concerning the exact date of Jesus' birth also discouraged arrangement of a special celebration. Tradition, chronology and astronomy, when called upon

to settle the question, produced only a variety of dates, of which the most widely accepted were January 6, March 25, and December 25. According to Chrysostom, the golden-tongued preacher of the early church, a long period of discussion and negotiation preceded agreement on the date December 25, reached late in the fourth century. General observance of Christmas came only in the following century.

The December season in the Roman Empire, however, was already devoted to the celebration of a pagan feast, the Saturnalia, a seven day period following the 19th of December. This was the midpoint of the winter solstice when the days became shorter and shorter and the sun weak and far

away. Elaborate ceremonials were customary at this time among the ancient peoples of the Mediterranean and southern Europe, in tribute to the sun-god, whose rays brought forth rich harvests from the soil and thus maintained human life on earth. At such feasts huge bonfires were kindled in order to give the sun-god strength and bring him back to life again. Great was the rejoicing when gradually lengthening days heralded the return of light, and thus of new life.

The coincidence of the newly-established Christmas festival and that of the pagan Saturnalia was partly a deliberate attempt on the part of the church to distract the attention of new converts from long-established heathen rites and replace them with positive Christian celebrations. The central idea of the winter solstice, the return of light, was made the pivot around which the Christmas festival moved; only it was not the sun in the sky, but Jesus, the Light of the World, who was the hope of new life for mankind.

An illustration of how this transition took place is recorded by the ancient historian Bede in his "Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation" where he shows how December 25th was a festival long before the conversion of the people to

Christianity. He writes: "The ancient peoples of the Angli began the year on December 25th when we now celebrate the birthday of the Lord; and the very night which is holy to us, they called in their tongue 'modranecht', that is, the mother's night, by reason we suspect, of the ceremonies which in that night-long vigil they performed." Bede further records the instructions of Pope Gregory I to the missionaries sent to the out-lying provinces, such as Britain, in 601 A.D. "Let the shrines of idols by no means be destroyed but let the idols which are in them be destroyed. Let water be consecrated and sprinkled in these temples; let altars be erected . . . so that the people, not seeing their temples destroyed, may displace error, and recognize and adore the true God. . . And because they were wont to sacrifice oxen to devils, some celebration should be given in exchange for this . . . they should celebrate a religious feast and worship God by their feasting, so that still keeping outward pleasures, they may more readily receive spiritual joys."

For several centuries after Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, Christmas was almost solely a church anniversary observed by religious services. The rapid spread of Christianity through

pagan lands, coupled with the broad instructions of Gregory I and the co-operative attitude of the Roman missionaries, soon, however, opened the door to the adoption of non-Christian customs connected with the winter solstice. Gaiety and joyful merrymaking vied with the reverence of religious celebrations. Christmas was on its way to becoming both a religious and a secular celebration.

The change was evident in the open fires, the candles and other forms of illumination derived from the worship of the sun, with its accent on light. The Roman feast of the Saturnalia, and also the teutonic festivities in honour of their pagan gods, included among the merrymaking the giving and receiving of presents. The Romans had also decorated their pagan temples and homes with green boughs and flowers; the Druids of England gathered mistletoe with great ceremony and hung it in their homes; the Saxons of Germany, and then Britain, used holly, ivy and bay.

The Christmas tree, however, is attributed to the English missionary to Germany, Boniface, who wished to replace the pagan rites of sacrifices to the teutonic god Odin at the sacred oak. He adop-

ted a fir tree adorned in honour of the Christ child. Accounts persist that it was Martin Luther, the great reformer, who introduced the Christmas tree lighted with candles. Prince Albert of Germany, consort of Queen Victoria, carried the Christmas tree custom with him to England; while German immigrants to the Americas introduced the custom there, from where it has spread widely over the world.

Music too has always been closely associated with Christmas. But during the early and medieval ages the Latin chants, litanies and hymns were too theological for popular use. Not until the 13th century, when it is said that Francis of Assisi sought to bring Christmas closer to the people, were these songs first sung in the vernacular. Gradually there emerged the carol, a song which on the one hand treats a religious topic in a familiar or festive style, or on the other hand is just a merry song.

Passing from Italy through France and Germany to England, the carol retained everywhere its typical simplicity, fervour and mirthfulness. Popular enthusiasm encouraged the singing of folk songs and carols on the Christmas theme by minstrels, and later by waits, or bands of singers passing from house to house

with their gaily sung carols. Great musicians have left an imperishable heritage of inspiring Christmas compositions, from the simple song to masterpieces such as Handel's 'Messiah' with its 'Hallelujah Chorus.'

In the sixth century the four Sundays immediately preceding Christmas were set aside as a time of devotional preparation known as the Advent season, ending on Christmas Eve. Beginning also at that time was the celebration of midnight mass in Roman Catholic churches. Its abandonment during Reformation times by the Protestant Church led to the development of the Christmas morning service, especially in Lutheran churches. It was set at an early hour because the shepherds were the first on the scene at the nativity in Bethlehem, coming early and returning to their work.

Merrymaking gradually entered more and more into the popular celebration of Christmas during medieval times. During that age it was not a matter of a day or two, but a period lasting from Christmas Eve to Epiphany on January 6th, and in some localities even longer. In England from the 11th to the 17th centuries, Christmas became increasingly the great festival of

the year, with observance lasting from Christmas Eve to Twelfth Day. The great halls of the feudal lords were decked with holly and thrown open, not only to their friends, but also to their tenants and household staff. Wassailing, feasting, songs and games, dancing, masquerading, and mummers (play-actors) presenting pantomines and masques, were all part of the festivities. Eventually a Lord of Misrule and his jester were appointed to direct the revels and keep them uproarious, from the opening ceremony, when the yule log was dragged in, until the last moment of the holiday season.

Elaborate feasts were prepared, heralded by the entry of the chief cook carrying the traditional boar's head and followed by servants bearing choice delicacies in incredible variety. The wild license which developed in these celebrations, completely foreign to the inner vision and meaning of Christmas, brought them into disfavour with the Puritans. In 1644 they were forbidden by Parliament, and to this day Scotland has never returned to secular celebrations on Christmas Day, preferring New Year's Day for such customs and the giving of presents.

After the Restoration, under Charles II, the English observance

of Christmas gradually returned to both a church ceremonial and a home festival. It still retained the flavour of earlier days when the lord of the castle received everyone, as shown by the evident goodwill during the season among all classes of society. But many of the suppressed customs lived on only through Christmas pageants, in the design of Christmas cards and favours, and the formalities observed at social functions.

Alongside of the religious remembrance of the birth of our Lord were the secular celebrations in terms of family reunions, gifts, decorations, cards and parties, and a pantomime for the children, who were given a greater share in the festivities. "Father Christmas," the English counterpart of "Santa Claus" was introduced for the benefit of the children. Dicken's "A Christmas Carol," written in 1843, portrays vividly the Christmas of the times.

Elsewhere independent developments took place. In Scandinavia custom demands elaborate preparations begun weeks before Christmas; the whole house is cleaned, renovated and redecorated; cooking of special meats, baking of breads, fancy cakes and cookies, is completed; all must be in readiness

for three weeks of hospitality and leisure. In Germany, Christmas has always been kept in the old manner of attendance at church services and a home festival centred around the Christmas tree and the gifts piled around and nearby; their distribution preceded by the singing of carols. In the Netherlands and Belgium the children's holiday, when the customs associated with Christmas and feasting are observed, is called the feast of St. Nicholas and falls on December 6th. December 25th is reserved as a religious holiday, with services in the churches and quiet family gatherings in the homes.

One of the traditions is Santa Claus, a contraction for St. Nicholas, who was born in the third century; he became a bishop and gained distinction in the councils of the church being especially famed for unexpected gifts, and later associated with the giving of presents during the season at the end of the year. Adopted first by the Netherlands as the patron saint of children, St. Nicholas has become the delight of children all over the world, where he is known not only as Santa Claus, but Kris Kringle, La Befana, Yule Tomten, Christkindli; usually inseparable from reindeer and sleigh, and his descent of chimneys on Christmas Eve.

In predominantly Roman Catholic countries, the heart of the Christmas celebration centres around the crèche or crib rather than the Christmas tree. These realistic tableaux, in miniature, of the Nativity are said to have been introduced into an Italian church by Francis of Assisi in 1224, in an effort to bring Christmas to the people. Before the Pesepio, or Nativity scene, the candles are lighted, the children recite, musicians play, and the guests kneel. Beautiful artistry is often expressed in the arrangement of the scene and the garnish of flowers with which it is decorated. The midnight mass is the high point in the religious observances, followed in France by an elaborate Christmas supper in the home. Family dinner and reunions follow on Christmas day, but the French, like the Scottish, prefer to reserve other customs, such as the giving of presents, to New Year's Day. The traditional parties take place around Epiphany in January.

The immigration of so many nationalities to the new world has made Christmas in the Americas a combination of many strands varying with the background of the people in particular areas, but largely combinations of customs discussed above. The greatest con-

trast comes in tropical countries or lands south of the equator, where December 25th falls in the summer. The evergreens have been replaced by flowers, the open fires and candles by fireworks, the traditional indoor festivities by picnics, fiestas, and boating parties. Missionaries spending their first Christmas in such lands have often gone to great lengths to create artificially the atmosphere of a northern Christmas with its tree, and decorations, fireplace and gifts, in order to make the season feel like Christmas. It has come as a shock to them later to realize that such atmosphere only demonstrates the hold of custom and habit on the individual; and that all around them in a tropical clime, with the rustle of the palm tree and the raucous bray of a donkey, there is the genuinely authentic atmosphere of a Bethlehem stable in the first century A.D.

At this Christmastide may the prayer of our hearts be: Deliver us, Lord, from the bondage of things, from all that would hide from our eyes the glory of Thy Son, and our adoration of His Advent to be our Saviour. For the true message of Christmas is: "CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY!"

OUR ALUMNI FELLOWSHIP



MR. A. M. DEANS, M.C., ALUMNI AND FIELD SECRETARY

THE YEAR'S END USUALLY brings with it the time for stock-taking as we look back upon our year's work. What more suitable time than now can be found to report to our Alumni Association on things accomplished in 1957.

Our Alumni Regional Picnic was a highlight of the Alumni year, held on the beautiful grounds of the Neighbourhood Workers' Camp at Bolton, Ontario, on Saturday, June 1st. It was attended by 281 of our Alumni Association members, with 8 branches represented. There were graduates present who had not returned to the College or attended an Alumni function since their graduation. Some of these graduated in the 30's and 40's. After a grand afternoon of games in the spacious grounds, we had our supper in the Camp's Rotary

Hall. Rev. W. Tyler led us in family devotions. It was a good day, and all left with a sense of refreshing and of happy fellowship.

There were 171 who registered for "Homecoming Day," meeting at the College and 130 sat down to dinner in the College dining-room in the evening. The day began with prayer groups meeting in lecture rooms, while branch representatives from Hamilton, Niagara Falls, Brantford, London, St. Thomas, Kitchener and Toronto met to discuss communication problems and branch organization. At three o'clock Principal the Rev. E. L. Simmonds led us in one of his inimitable Bible hours, after which the graduates and friends were free to renew acquaintances, enjoy class reunions or tour the buildings. At supper-time, class-

mates met at the tables for a time of reunion and fellowship. We were pleased to have as our guests the class of 1958 as well as the first Alumni Scholarship winners, Miss Doris Soules and Mr. Nevil Hodgson. In the evening several of our missionaries gave brief messages, some illustrated with slides, on their work in Africa and Japan; others, serving with the Children's Special Service Mission and Child Evangelism Fellowship, told of their summer activities. The Secretary-Treasurer then reported on the Association's year. During the evening the student body met with us and one of their number participated in the singing of a solo. Many of these young people left early in the meeting to attend their regular Saturday open-air meeting. A full day of fellowship and of blessing ended as Rev. T. Maxwell led in family devotions.

The Alumni Association this year has contributed \$8,289.40 to the General Fund of the College and \$2,200.50 to the McNicol Memorial Library Fund, and an additional \$400.00 for Alumni Scholarships. This is a remarkable achievement, although even now it represents less than 30% of our Alumni membership who are giving financial assistance toward the work of the College.

Numerous letters have been received from our missionaries in the far places of the earth. How we

praise God for them as they faithfully endeavour, by His grace, to make Christ known.

The staff members are busily engaged in their many daily jobs. Miss Sylvia Smith is taking a refresher course in the day classes and Miss Vivienne Rose of the class of '56 is our new Alumni Office secretary. Miss Ruth Oliver has left us and is serving the Lord in the Shantymen's Christian Association office. Miss Lilian Softley is combining the work of Assistant Secretary with her work in the Student Activities Office and as yet we have no one else to replace her in the general office. On her doctor's instruction Miss Koch has had to take a year's leave of absence from the College kitchen and Mrs. Fraser has taken on the job of supervising in this area, ably assisted by Mrs. Harris and recently by Mrs. George. They are apparently enjoying their newly painted and renovated kitchen, with its new sinks and automatic dishwasher.

As we look back on our year, we are grateful to our T.B.C. family everywhere for they have upheld the work of the College in prayer daily, and they have sent contributions in money and materials so that they may share in keeping the College strong in her God-given task of "holding forth the Word of Life."

It is anticipated the new College film will be ready for release in the

early spring of 1958. We trust this film will be an instrument in the hands of the Lord as we use it to acquaint Christian people with Toronto Bible College. Each Alumni Branch and individual member should consider it a personal responsibility to make the showing of this film possible in old and new areas.

During the coming year, let us look forward to renewed efforts as every Alumnus becomes a public relations officer as he or she tells others about what "our College" is doing and can do for Christian young people dedicated to the service of the Lord. Will you do your part? Pray, contribute and send us more students!



Christmas Dinner

(SPONSORED BY T.B.C. EVENING CLASSES)

Thursday, December 19th, 1957, 6 p.m.

Good Programme - Warm Fellowship
All Evening Class Students, T.B.C. Alumni and Friends
are welcome.

Tickets MUST be secured in advance — Price \$1.50

Please Phone WA. 1-5808 for your reservation.

Carol Service follows at 8.00 P.M.

in the Peoples Church.



Why I wish you a Merry Christmas



EDWARD N. BOOM, '58, PRESIDENT, STUDENT CABINET

MERRY CHRISTMAS YOU SAY? What a hollow meaning that phrase held for me not many years ago. Oh yes, I let the words slip glibly off my tongue, but how could a fellow who blasphemed God and who ridiculed the Bible have any conception of the implications of these words? Merry Christmas is what I said, but what a mockery it was.

My eyes were blind, my heart was hard, and in parody I sang the Christmas hymns. There was no room at the "inn" of my soul for such a person as Christ. Place Him on the throne of my life? Nothing doing! I shouted with the rest of the foolish mob, "Crucify Him!" Who does He think He is, this Son of a mere carpenter! And so the great loving heart of the Saviour wept over one of the same ilk as those of whom it is written, "*And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it.*" Yes, I

was of the same calibre as they.

My sins helped to send Him to the cross of Calvary. It was there we crucified Him. It was at His feet that we gambled for the only possession in the world that He owned. Oh, the shame of it all. Yet the unbelief and blindness and wrath of men were transformed to praise, honor and glory, for that very cross became the means of salvation. Today, it is from the Cross that the light of the gospel shines to the uttermost part of the earth, lighting the way to life and victory and peace.

It was this Light that penetrated into the deepest recesses of my sin-drenched heart. It was the powerful searchlight of God's all-inclusive gaze that laid bare the very things I tried to hide. Oh, the relief of it all when He came and made His abode in my heart. A crushing burden was lifted from my shoulders and He became my

Saviour, my Friend in time of need. I began to learn what it meant to say, "I wish you a Merry Christmas."

Saddened again, was the Saviour's heart when I grew cold toward His Shepherding care. My business became the dominating theme and influence of my life. I found no time for fellowship with the One Who had shed His blood for me. I had no time to read the revelation He had given His children, over the many years. I brought my tithe into the storehouse, and a little besides. Surely I was treading the right path? Was I not contributing to the support of His church and helping to spread the gospel by supporting His workers? Ah, yes, but that was only God's partial plan for my life.

But how was God to reveal His whole plan if there was no communication with Him? In retrospect there unfolds a panorama of a loving Father, seeking to discover His will to an unheeding and rebellious son. By what means could such a One penetrate the veneer of religiosity and self-satisfaction? Not through His Word, for it was neglected. Not through the precious avenue of verbal and spiritual communication, for this son seldom prayed. There comes to me now the reality of Psalm 106:13-15, "*They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel; But lusted exceedingly in the wilder-*

ness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." What a pitiful picture, "leanness of soul," and it was true of me.

Since I had closed the normal avenues of communications with God, He was required to deal with me otherwise. It was through a time of physical trial that the Father sought to draw me to Himself. When I cried out, that my sufferings might be stayed through death, He saw fit to raise me to newness of health. Then in that still small voice He whispered His program for my life and also for that of my wife. We were to prepare ourselves to serve Him and He would later reveal the purpose for it all. By now I had a fuller understanding of what it meant to say, "*I wish you a Merry Christmas*"

What was to be the next step I wondered? The answer came at a Bible conference, where the Lord directed us to Toronto Bible College.

This is now our final year at T.B.C. What blessed fellowship we have experienced here. We have prayed, studied and played together, united in the bond of love in Christ Jesus and all because He, the eternal Son of God, became flesh and dwelt among men and died for our sins and rose again and ever lives to make intercession for us. Is it any wonder that I wish you a Merry Christmas!



THE NEW YEAR CAN BE HAPPY TOO!



BETH HUDDLESTON, R.N., '58

CO-PRESIDENT, STUDENT CABINET

IF THE CHRISTMAS STORY were to end on December the twenty-fifth, what a difference it would make to us as we face a new year! At Christmas we celebrate the day our Saviour came down to earth, bringing God's message of love, joy, peace, and salvation to the world. Isn't it wonderful that this message is for every day of every year? God gives us the gift of happiness and continual joy every day as we walk in His will. The apostle Paul was always rejoicing, regardless of circumstances. He rejoiced in his sal-

vation and in the love of his Master and he admonishes us to "rejoice in the Lord always." Is this what we mean when we wish someone a Happy New Year?

For the Christian, God is in every tomorrow. He will give guidance, strength and hope as He plans his life path for him. Time is in far better hands than man's. It is in the hands of God Himself.

The opening of the new year is a time of retrospect, when we stop to think of the life behind us and to think of how much we have

done to show forth the praises of Him who has called us "out of darkness into His marvellous light." Did we fulfil His purpose for us?

It is a time to look to the future, "to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," and to a new year of obedience and service to Him.

What a challenge, as the door of this new year swings open, to turn our eyes to the new doors of God-given opportunities which are set before us, and to go forth working for Him. It is then we can say we are happy in the service of the King.

It can be a door to a deeper, richer, fellowship with God. The greatest joy for those who name the Name of Christ is fellowship with Him, and I believe at the beginning of a new year He calls us to such a fellowship.

It can be a door to greater usefulness in His service. If we are faithful to God in the little things day by day He will reward us and lead us on to greater things. God has a plan, for every day of our lives, which ties in with an overall plan.

We look backward and forward but, by God's grace, we must look upward, to Him who has promised

to instruct us and teach us in the way that we should go and to guide us with His eye.

To me this new year is like many doors opening to many new experiences. It is like the unfolding of the overall plan. How I do rejoice in His leading in my life day by day! Since I came to know Him as Saviour and yielded my life to Him He has gradually been revealing His will one step at a time. There is no joy on earth like the joy of knowing Christ and making Him known.

Following graduation from T.B.C. this year, I look forward to the life of witness and service my Master has called me to as a medical missionary in Ecuador, South America. As I enter this new year it is with my hand in His, confident that His way is best. Day by day there will be new lessons to learn, new battles to fight and difficulties to overcome, but my happiness lies in the One who has proven faithful and who, when He is trusted, never fails.

Going forth in the Lord's will makes my year happy, and your new year can be happy too, if, as you stand at the door of the year you put your hand into the hand of God. It is better than light and safer than the known way.



TORONTO BIBLE COLLEGE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
FACULTY AND STAFF
send
SINCERE BEST WISHES
for a
BLESSED CHRISTMAS
and a
HAPPY NEW YEAR
to all
T.B.C. ALUMNI,
STUDENTS AND FRIENDS
AROUND THE WORLD

Alumni News

PERSONALS

REV. BENJAMIN GEARO, '45, received the B.A. degree from St. Andrews University, London, England, in March.

REV. CHARLES, '03, and Mrs. Waddell of St. Thomas celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary on July 27th.

Mr. PAUL BURNS, '46, was inducted into the ministry of Markham Baptist Church on October 19th. DR. DIXON A. BURNS, '16, took part in the service.

On October 9th, Miss AUDREY ELLIOT, '54, graduated from Calgary General Hospital. She won a Proficiency Award and was voted by her classmates as being the most influential Student Nurse in preserving ideals and ethics.

BIRTHS

On January 17th, a son, James Peter, to Rev. Robert and Mrs. (JEAN HILL, '51) Holmes, in Ottawa.

In Saskatchewan, on June 3rd, a son, Leslie John, to Mr. MURRAY, '52, and Mrs. (EVELYN, '50-'51) RICHARDSON.

To Mr. FREDERICK, '55, and Mrs. (DOROTHY AXT, '52) ALLAN, a daughter, Patricia Lynn, on June 20th, in Toronto.

To Mr. JAMES, '57, and Mrs. (GLORIA, '54-'55) LEWIS, a daughter, Robin Lee, in Toronto on July 6th. She passed away August 1st.

On July 7th, a son, Barry Matthew, to Mr. Barclay and Mrs. (BERNICE COMBER, '47) Smith, at Toronto Western Hospital.

A son, Gilbert Wayne, on July 8th, to Mr. Wilfred and Mrs. (EILEEN KLEIN, '44) Johann, at Wroxeter, Ont.

In Nigeria, to Mr. FRED, '54 and Mrs. (HELEN MITCHELL, '54) GOULD, a son, James Barton, on July 12th.

On July 15th, a daughter, Helen Patricia, to REV. CHRISTIAAN, '51 and Mrs. (GRACE WORLING, '54) COSTERUS, in Toronto.

In Khartoum, Sudan, a daughter, Rebecca Charlotte, on August 1st, to Mr. INER, '55 and Mrs. (CARMEN MALCOLM, '55) ROBINSON.

On August 7th, a son, Ronald Powell, to Mr. R. and Mrs. (MABEL ANDERSON, '47) MORRIS, at Toronto.

A daughter, Sandra Lee, on August 25th, to Mr. EVERETT, '55 and Mrs. (ALICE BEDFORD, '53-'55) SEDGWICK, at Montreal.

To Mr. Luis and Mrs. (SHIRLEY MARRIOTT, '53) FERNANDEZ, a son, Ricardo Luis, in Toronto.

A son, Christopher Judson, on June 14th, to Rev. Judson and Mrs. (MARIAN RIDEOUT, '44) COREY, at Port Hope, Ont.

At Stouffville, Ont., a son, Howard Daniel, to Mr. & Mrs. (JEAN BROWN, '56) Howard Doner, on Nov. 7th.

MARRIAGES

In Nigeria, on July 17th, Gladys Beckett to WILLIAM TUCK, '54. FRED GOULD, '54, was best man.

MURIEL STEWART, M.V.'52, to Geoffrey Beatty, M.D., on July 20th, at Knox Presbyterian Church.

On August 17th, in Church of the Crusaders, Toronto, Helen Freethy to SAMUEL BURGESS, '51-'53.

Gladys Drake to ROYCE PILSWORTH, '50, on August 17th, at Englehart

Baptist Church. Mrs. MARION NEWBY, '50, was the soloist and CHARLES INFURNARI, '50, an usher.

PEARL CHRISTIAN, '47, to David Horten, on September 6th, at Chalmers Road Presbyterian Church in Hamilton.

At the Preston Baptist Church, on September 7th, ELEANORE GATEHOUSE, '53, to James Johannsen. REV. S. E. CLARKE, '52, officiated.

On September 21st, in Bracebridge Baptist Church, GLADYS KIRK, E.C. '54., to JOHN DOWNEY, E.C. '51. KENNETH GRIESE, E.C. '51, was best man, and Mrs. Kenneth (GWEN KIRK, E.C. '51) Griese was matron of honour. MISS INES WATSON, E.C. '47, was soloist.

DEATHS

At Mt. Hamilton Hospital, on July 17th, MRS. ALICE BRADFORD, '42-'45.

Mrs. H. W. B. JOLLY, E.C. '08, on July 24th.

On July 3rd, Miss LILY TILLEY, '02, in California.

Rev. ALBERT JONES, '31, on Nov. 16th, 1957, at Emery, Ont.