1925

The True Spirit of Christmas

O. H. Cessna

Iowa State College

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker

Part of the Home Economics Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol5/iss7/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Homemaker by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
The True Spirit of Christmas

DR. O. H. CESSNA
Chaplain Iowa State College.

I
like the ring of sincerity in this topic. The emphasis seems to be on the word "true." Evidently the desire is to go beyond the mere surface observance of the day to its deeper meaning. I think this attitude is a true characteristic of our serious minded young people of today. They become impatient with what has been, with what is centered simply because it has been. The touchstone for them is not simply the traditional but the real.

It seems to me, as I check up on the thought of the present day, there is a very manifest note of seriousness. The terrible cataclysm of the Great War and the disillusionment following have had their effect. Men have turned to the deeper significance of things. They have come to realize that the difficulty was deep seated and constitutional in its nature. They have come to feel the inadequacy of mere human agency to meet the need and have turned to God and religion.

President Coolidge has recently given strong utterance to these convictions: "We do not need more material development, we need more spiritual development. We do not need more intellectual power, we need more character.

We do not need more law, we need more religion."

So this emphasis on the word "true" is in harmony with both the sincerity of thoughtful young people and also with those who see clearly the needs of the time. The suggestion "The True Meaning of Christmas" may mean that there have been associated with Christmas a lot of things that have drifted far from its real purpose and intent and the effort is to call us back to its "true" observance.

There are two aspects of this matter—the primary and what we might call derived interest. To reserve the order, on the one hand, Christmas has come to stand for one of the great "Home Days" in our yearly calendar. It is marked by vacations and holidays in our schools and business. It is the time when those who are away turn thoughtfully to home and, if possible, find their way to the old home town. It is a time when we remember the loved ones there with our gifts and greetings. Step into any book store and see the great assortment of Christmas greetings. You will find they all contain expressions of joy and good wishes—there is not a note of sadness among them all. If we have griefs and troubles we seek to lay them aside on this day. It seems to be a day of reconciliation; even great nations at war have been known to declare a truce for the time being and the soldiers of opposing armies frequently mingle in friendly converse and meetings. A little holiday spirit in the presence of the great spirit of good will of the day and mingle freely in friendly associations.

It is the day—the joy-day of children. Some of the happiest scenes of home life are those of Christmas week. The days before are filled with mysterious doings. Packages are slipped in and hidden away and a kind of mystery is thrown around the occasion. The tree is prepared; the bright decorations are strewed over it; the candles are scattered about in the midst of the display. The presents are labeled and brought in and hung about on the branches or piled on the table beneath. The children are in a very riot of joy and an eye is kept on them lest they slip in and made discoveries before hand. Indeed it is the day of all days in child life when the family is all together. The day is spent in feasting and joy and somehow the home-fires are rekindled and the home-ties are cemented more securely.

Edgar A. Guest has beautifully pictured the childhood joys of the Christmas time in his delightful poem, "A Boy on Christmas Day" given in his "A Path to Home."

If I could have my wish tonight it would not be for wealth or fame, it would not be for some delight that men who live in luxury claim. But it would be that I might rise at three or four a.m. to see, With eager, happy, boyish eyes, my presents on the Christmas tree. Throuout this world there is no joy, I know now I am growing gray, So rich as being just a boy, a little boy on Christmas Day.

I'd like once more to stand and gaze enraptured on the gilded tree, With eyes that know just how to blaze a heart still tuned to ecstasy; I'd like to feel the old delight, the surging thrills within me come; To love a thing with all my might, to grasp the pleasure of a drum; To know the meaning of a toy—a meaning lost to minds blase; To be just once again a boy, a little boy on Christmas Day.

I'd like to see a pair of skates the way they looked to me back then. Before I turned from boyhood's gate and marched into the world of men; I'd like to see a jackknife, too, with those same eager, dancing eyes That couldn't fault or blemish view; I'd like to feel the same surprise, The pleasure, free from all alloy, that he forgot ever passed day. When I was just a little boy and had my faith in Christmas Day.

Oh, little, laughing, roughish lad, the king that rules across the sea Would give his scepter if he had such joy as now belong to thee! And beards of gray would give their gold, and all the honors they possess, Once more within their grasp to hold To wean the last fee of happiness.

Earth sends no greater, surer joy, as, too soon, thou, as I, shall say, Than that of him who is a boy, a little boy on Christmas Day.

Who would want to kill Christmas day with all its joys and delightful associations with home and childhood. And yet it is too true that the day is frequently spoiled by a spirit of dissipation and commercialism. Some have even thought that it resulted in more harm than good and have even called for its cessation. Voices, however, have been raised against this treatment of the noble day and new emphasis is being put on its true significance. A very suggestive article appeared in the December number of the Delinctor, entitled "The Man Who Tried to Kill Christmas." It is typical of the appeal being made by many thoughtful people. Two rather striking statements show this attitude. They are as follows:

"I am taking Christmas off my private calendar. Hereafter I will discontinue the custom of offering gifts or other Christmas tokens, and earnestly request you all to do the same with me. The modern Christmas is now actually a day of much worry, distress, sorrow and ill-will."

"I think Christmas is the year's greatest day. Men look to it as a source from which to draw the power and will to daily express their devotion to highest ideals, as a day when the brotherhood of man embraces the world."

One man wrote both these opinions of Christmas. He wrote them both from the same heart. It was a heart full of bitterness when he penned the first lines; a heart full of understanding and sympathy when he wrote the last. Yes, there is much in Christmas and we could not spare it from our calendar even if we only thought of these secondary associations which rather about it. This (Continued on page 15)
for our hearts to be thrilled with the actual in experience if we are to make actual in experience if we are to make the true observance of Christmas the most effective. It is this aspect of it that must be emphasized if we are to rescue Christmas from dissipation and commercialism. It is the element that is emphasized by President Coolidge in his reference to the need of religion. We must enter into the real religious spirit of the day.

Not only is it the principal day in the joys of home life; it is also an important day in the church calendar of every variety of Christian service throughout the world. Christmas day and Easter are marked days and they have found echo in the sincere religious messages that should not be overlooked. The angel choir as they sang on that midnight clear, "Hark, the Glad Song," "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," "O Come All Ye Faithful," "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," and the beautiful Noel, "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night," and that beautiful song of Phillip Brooks, "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and Isaac Watt's great hymn set to Handel's inspiring music, "Joy to the World, the Lord is Come." All these express the deep spiritual significance of the day and they have their echo in the sincere religious heart of the world. This is true because it shows the coming of God—the great Father heart to meet the world's need. It shows the coming of God—the great promise on which the hope of humanity hangs—the incarnation of the Son of God. Jesus is God speaking in language that we can understand—"And the Word was made Flesh and Dweit among Men." And Jesus Christ is the supreme Heralder of God's forgiveness because he answers the fundamental needs of human nature and there will be the discovery of the true meaning of Christmas when we unveil ourselves to the true meaning of Christmas. Let me repeat it again, Jesus is God, speaking in language that we can understand—"And the Word was made Flesh and Dweit among Men." And Jesus Christ is the supreme Heralder of God's forgiveness because he answers the fundamental needs of human nature and there will be the discovery of the true meaning of Christmas when we unveil ourselves to the true meaning of Christmas.

To understand the "true" spirit of Christmas in its deeper significance is to know Him whose advent into the world is thus joyously heralded. There are three or four great events in his life that need to be closely linked together and we need to have them all in mind to understand the true significance of any one of them. These events are the Birth scene celebrated on Christmas, the Garden and Calvary scene where the blood of Jesus goes down into the depths because of the sin of the world, and then his Resurrection where he is triumphant over all the opposing forces and "I would rather be with Him then," and we seem to think of it as all only in the past. It will be necessary for us to revise our thought and add "I would rather be with Him now." In other words we are to think of Jesus not only as a precious memory but as an actual presence in the world today. His coming as little babe in Bethlehem entering into all the needs and limitations of humanity is but a fore token of that more triumphant presence in the spirit in the world today. The true significance of Christmas can only come when Jesus Christ is made real to human hearts now. Let me repeat it again, Jesus is God, speaking in language that we can understand—"And the Word was made Flesh and Dweit among Men." And Jesus Christ is the supreme Heralder of God's forgiveness because he answers the fundamental needs of human nature and there will be the discovery of the true meaning of Christmas when we unveil ourselves to the true meaning of Christmas.

A full line of Fraternity and Sorority Crests to attach to any piece of jewelry.

236 Main St.
Footwear Fancies for Christmas

Delightful new patterns for Christmas are of such variety as to please every fancy. Shown in strap or D’Orsay models, made of patent, satin, tan kid and silver cloth.

Brannberg & Hubbart
West of Sheldon-Munn Hotel

L System Suits
Shown in Ames exclusively by Hedrick’s Campus Toggery

LINDER’S Shoe Repairing Means Satisfaction

Everything In Music...

All latest Sheet and Record Music Also a full line of Musical Instruments

AMES MUSIC COMPANY
323 Main Phone 360-W

True Spirit of Christmas
(Continued from page 15)
Life into personal victorious strength and progress. In short he brings “The inspiration of the eternal into the duties of the passing hour.” This is what Dr. John Douglas Adam calls “The Heart of Christianity.” Dr. Adam says, “When we turn to the first followers of Christ, we find for them, the heart of Christianity consisted of an actual relationship to the spiritual presence of their Master who had survived death. Their Christianity was primarily a deep spiritual fellowship with the Master who had passed beyond physical limitation to a spiritual leadership which transcended space. And they actually knew him, far better, and they knew his aims and purposes far better, in their purely spiritual relationship to Him, than they did in the days of his flesh.” This then will make Christmas day the Glad Day of the year if it means the discovery to us of the real presence of the Master in our lives today. In the presence of that reality we shall come to put proper value on all those great days of joy this will mean that God is not only brought within human focus but that His resources are made humanly available and that we shall receive power to be true witnesses for him in the world. Our Christianity will not be “primarily a task but a power to achieve a task.” The “true” meaning of Christmas will surely come when we associate with it, not only all the beautiful joys of child life and home association, and the joy of giving and making others happy in our gifts, but also when we see through and beyond all these the real power and presence of Him who is in the world today, the inspiration of our hope and courage and song as he was in the days of his advent when he came as the “Little Babe in Bethlehem.”

Parno’s Jewelry Store

Full line of Fraternity and Sorority Crests, we can put on any jewelry.

Largest stock of College Jewelry in Ames.

Watches, Clocks and Jewelry repaired.

Over 20 years experience.

First Door East of Campus Lunch.

QUADE
Students’ Headquarters for High Grade Photography
417 Main St. Phone 28