

The Northwestern Lutheran

The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; let Him not leave us, nor forsake us. 1 Kings 8: 57.

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CHRISTMAS

Unto us a child is born. Hallelujah!
Unto us a son is given. Hallelujah!

WHILST SHEPHERDS WATCHED

Whilst shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The Angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

"Fear not," said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind,
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

"To you in David's town this day
Is born of David's line
A Savior, which is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign,—

"The heavenly Babe you there shall find,
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swaddling bands,
And in a manger laid."

Thus spoke the Seraph, and forthwith
Appeared a heavenly throng
Of angels praising God, and thus
Addressed their joyful song:

"All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace,
Good-will henceforth from Heav'n to men,
Begin and never cease. Hallelujah."

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

By Martin Luther

Ah! dearest Jesus, Holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefil'd,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.
My heart for very joy doth leap,
My lips no more can silence keep,
I too must sing, with joyful tongue,
That sweetest ancient cradle song,
"Glory to God in highest Heaven,
Who unto men His Son hath given."
While angels sing with pious mirth,
A glad New Year to all the earth.—Ex.

COMMENTS

Christmas and The holiday spirit has survived the
Sentiment Christian meaning of Christmas. Just
as the German Christmas tree has
found a place in communities that resent anything
German in these days of violent partisanship, so has
the holiday of Christmas been retained by those who
will have nothing of Christ. There are two kinds of
Christmas celebrations; the one, the true one, which
rejoices in the birth of Jesus Christ the Savior; and
the other which seizes upon a few external features
of the celebration and vulgarizes the day by insipid
humanitarianism, which is but a mock after all, be-
cause that very humanitarianism would pass unnoticed
if it were practiced, as it should be to be true to itself,
throughout the year—instead of for a single day.—The
one celebration is one of sentiment, the other is mere
sentimentality. There is no possibility of identifying
the two. All appeals for union Christmas services or
civic Christmas celebrations must be distasteful to
us; they are devitalizing our Christmas, which is a
vital thing. They make of our spiritual festival a mere
occasion for gift-mongering. If the sentimental public
needs some outlet for its sentimentality, it may do
as it pleases, but it is the usual inconsiderateness and
arrogance that prompts their demands that professing
Christians, who have a spiritual Christmas to celebrate,
should merge their holiday with the other, which is
so entirely different. There is a disposition even
among well meaning Christians to use opportunities
offered in this manner for the dissemination of Chris-
tian doctrine; they believe if a few Christmas hymns
are sung and a prayer or two offered before the distri-
bution of gifts the performance has been christianized.
But nothing could be further from the truth; their
Christianity has been paganized. Christmas should be
jealously guarded from such desecration. Beautiful
as such occasions for general fraternizing seem to be,
they are like so many other beautiful things—dazzling
but entirely lacking in the power of truth. Men and
women do not like to be spoil-sports; they dislike
spoil-sports the seemingly innocent plans of organizers of
these mock-Christmas celebrations. But if they are
Christians they should prefer infinitely to be called
spoil-sports, than to know themselves to be spoil-
faiths. Let gifts be distributed as lavishly as possible,
at any time, especially at Christmas by those who are
so inclined, but let us distinguish between gift-giving

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and promiscuous celebrating of Christmas, the holy season dedicated to the good will of God toward men revealed by the birth of Christ.—There was giving of gifts and unrestrained joy of a sort in the palace of Herod on that night of the Nativity—but that was not Christmas; there was wild carousing and exuberant celebration in the forests of Europe as the blazing Yule-log illumined the festal gatherings of our heathen forefathers at the time when the wintry sun turned back in his course—and that was not Christmas; and today there is much gift-giving and much celebrating that is as far from the Christmas that has the Babe of Bethlehem as its sole inspiration. It is the true Christmas that Christians must preserve from the cheapening vulgarities of an untutored majority steeped in sentimentality; by doing that it preaches loudly and insistently the only Good Will toward Men.

H. K. M.

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“Too Much Cross and Bible”

If it concerned any other matter, it would be very amusing. Can you imagine a theater audience in

revolt because there is too much acting? Or a concert audience because the orchestra played music? Can you imagine a natatorium boycotted because there was wet water in the swimming pool?—Yet, a “people’s church” in one of our large cities had to be reorganized because the trustees accused their pastor of “preaching too much cross and Bible.” They said that their church was founded on “general principles. It believes in an omnipresent God, without any intermediary. It is founded on a high spirituality.”—The principles were not general enough to tolerate the cross and the Bible. As one of the members put it: “Dr. Blank read too much from the Bible; he ought to read more from Emerson.” It may not be worth much, but there was at least that much left in this people’s church that the pastor was supported in the stand he had taken; and the reason (which does not indicate very high spirituality) why he was retained is given: “We believe the church will hold together better if the pastor keeps on preaching the way he has done. What is the use of having a church unless we believe something for which churches stand?”—It is not very high ground taken by these “conservatives,” but it is many degrees higher than the one on which we find so many modern churches, “founded on general principles.” There is one admission made during the controversy that interests us: churches will not hold together unless they have some standard of belief. It is our prayer and our hope that our erring brethren will eventually perceive the larger truth, that the church of Christ will utterly disappear from such congregations that have no standard of faith; and that that standard of faith is not a variable quantity, but is the one faith preached

by Christ and the Apostles.—A revolution similar to the one just described took place not far away at about the same time; forty students at the Baptist missionary school for women declared their intention of discontinuing their studies if the manner of teaching the Bible there in vogue were persisted in. The teachers at the school seem to be of that destructive modern order, which tears the Bible story to pieces and parades its liberal views. These students object to that; they believe the Bible, even if their teachers do not. They will accept the Bible at its face value, or if they are not permitted to do that, they will leave the institution. They refuse to accept a compromise offered, which proposes to teach both the conservative and the liberal interpretation side by side. We cannot withhold our admiration for the courageous course taken by these young ladies. We rejoice that such testimony is given. It cheers us to note that the destructive utterances of self-styled leaders are not always an indication of the attitude of those whom they claim as their disciples.

H. K. M.

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Pastoral Letters

One of our pastors recently favored us by sending a sample copy of a letter he is circulating among his members. It is not a congregational paper but has more the nature of a personal communication. The idea is beyond doubt a good one and may profitably be imitated where conditions would warrant it. There are many things that are difficult to touch upon in a sermon and equally difficult to bring to the mind of the parishioner in a house to house campaign; the latter course is sometimes prohibited by the lack of time. By a letter, covering one small sheet, as this one does, the pastor may approach his members almost as directly and extensively as if he were speaking to them and he can do that in a manner that reaches all his parishioners at virtually the same time. If it is a subject of great importance that needs further elaboration, he has the very best opening possible for a continuation of the discussion orally when next he meets the reader of the letter. This is perhaps one of the greatest time saving features of the plan. There is another reason for thinking about this method of communicating with the congregation; unfortunately there are always a number of members who are quite irregular in attending services and for that reason are frequently out of touch with the affairs of the congregation; they feel that affairs are getting along quite well without them. They cannot escape this appeal and renewed interest and better attendance at services may be effected by the use of these sermonettes by mail. It is conceivable that the idea may not appeal to every pastor with equal force; if it does not, there is little use in attempting it, because it must be born out of enthusiasm.

—In any event, the example furnished by our brother shows that the Christian may utilize advertising devices to good advantage, by a restrained and dignified use of the "black art." The Lutheran pastor need not be cautioned against abusing the opening given him by this plan; he will always remember that when he addresses his flock, by word of mouth or by the written word, he is their pastor and nothing else. He will not utilize his "mailing list" to propagate ideas foreign to the economy of God's household and will not venture to give advice that lies beyond his sphere of official activity as a minister of the Church of Christ. If by this method—or any other method—questions of vital interest to the Christian are brought before him and are introduced in the family discussion, an important service has been rendered the church. H. K. M.

ETERNAL LIFE

"I believe that the Holy Ghost will give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true."

I Believe I believe, I cannot see it, I have no tangible proof; in fact, the very thought of life eternal is so wonderful that it passes all human understanding. I believe, I do not follow a certain instinct in my breast, nor do I listen to the reasonings of others; philosophy has not given me this hope, philosophy can not take it from me. I cannot grasp, I cannot understand, but I can and do believe; and this believing is not a vague and indistinct yearning, it is a blessed, triumphant assurance: "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. 1:12. I believe, I trust, because God tells me that there is a life eternal and assures me that it is mine.

John 3:15:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

John 2:25: "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."

The Holy Ghost to All Believers Will Give

Eternal life is a gift, it is not the natural end of man, nor a prize that he is able to merit by his conduct. Jesus says John 10:10: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Rom. 6:23: "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

It is a gift, furthermore, because God hath by His Spirit "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and because "We are kept by the power of God through

faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

Unto Me Unto me, as I am, a person, consisting of body and soul. I, the same who is now on his pilgrimage through this vale of sorrows shall reach home. I shall not lose my identity, shall not be absorbed by a "universal mind." I who hope now will see, who mourn now will rejoice.

Job 19:26:27: "And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

But, though I shall be the same person, I will have undergone a great and blessed change. My soul will in death have cast off all sin, that still cleaves unto me through life, to be freed from it forever, fully restored to the image of the holy and pure God.

1 John 3:2: "We shall be like him."

Ps. 17:15: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

My body, too, will be prepared for the future glorious existence, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." 1 Cor. 15:42-44: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown in natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." Body and soul, I will then enter into life.

Life Where is life, but in the Author of Life; who lives, but he who is with God, beholding Him in His infinite glory and basking in the radiance of His love?

Rev. 21:3: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

1 Cor. 15:28: "Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

1 John 3:2: "For we shall see him as he is."

1 Cor. 13:12: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

Who is able to describe the beauty of the life of the saints in the presence of God? Paul tells us that "he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." The Holy Ghost when inspiring the men by whose hand these promises of God were recorded for me, ransacked, as it were, human life and language for expressions that are able to make sweet and desirable to me this promised life.

Luke 22:30: "That ye may eat and drink at my

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table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

John 14:2: "In my Father's house are many mansions."

Hebr. 4:9: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

Hebr. 11:16: "But now they desired a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." "Called us unto his eternal glory." 1 Pet. 5:10. "In thy presence is fullness of joy." Ps. 16:11. "They shall obtain joy and gladness." Is. 35:10. "Might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Hebr. 9:15. "And their works do follow them." Rev. 14:13. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." 2 Tim. 4:7,8.

All pain and suffering will be far removed from me.

Rev. 21:4: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Is. 35:10: "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Is. 60:20: "The days of their mourning shall be ended."

Eternal I am happy now, having peace with God through faith in my blessed Savior, yet I am admonished to "work out my salvation with fear and trembling," and to "pray, lest I enter into temptation." The promised life is eternal, I cannot lose it, I will enjoy it without trembling.

1 Thess. 4:17: "And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Rev. 3:12: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out."

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

This Is Most Certainly True I know what the materialist says about my hope of a life eternal, I know that he considers me a fool, but his ungodly rantings are nothing to me, I defy him

and cling all the more firmly to the promises of my God for his rantings. And these promises make the things I hope for more real to me than the things I see with my natural eye. This can, and often does, deceive me, but it is impossible that my God deceive me.

This is most certainly true, therefore I "set my affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. 3:2.

This is most certainly true, therefore I am able to bear in patience the cross my God lays upon me, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Rom. 8:18. This is most certainly true, this hope gives me strength to battle against the devil, the world, and my flesh, to walk in true godliness, "for every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John 3:3. This is most certainly true, therefore I pray:

Savior, hasten Thine appearing;

Bring, O bring the glorious day,

When, the awful summons hearing,

Heaven and earth shall pass away.

Then, with golden harps, we'll sing,

"Glory, glory to our King." J. B.

THE VIRGIN-BIRTH OF OUR LORD

"Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb," so says that old and glorious song, Te Deum laudamus, sung for centuries upon this poor earth, even to this day. And "conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," stands forth in our Creed as the imperishable rock of salvation. Sacred, unfathomable, is the mystery of that Virgin Birth. We can scarcely believe that it has been doubted, discredited, even denied, within the Church itself. Yet such has been the case, particularly within the last decades. The Virgin birth of Christ has been seriously attacked by moderns, and the result is that in very many quarters it is openly treated as a fable. Belief in it is scouted as unworthy of twentieth century intelligence. The habit is fast spreading in modern Christendom of regarding it as no essential part of Christian faith. It is claimed that the Virgin birth is not even essential to Christ's sinlessness, for that would have been secured equally though Christ had been born of two parents. Nor is it essential to the Incarnation, it is urged, but separable from the truth of God's becoming Man, intimating that we may hold fast the latter and yet think the story of Matt. 1 and Luke 1 and 2 to be a myth, a dream.

But oh, the folly of it! to suppose that any one can hold the truth of the Incarnation without believing the miraculous Conception and Birth of Christ is a delusion with most disastrous results to the Christian's faith. Once admit that Christ was born as other men,

and the truth of the Incarnation fades away. A child born naturally of human parents can never be God incarnate. There can be no redemption, nor restoration of the human race by such a birth. The entail of original sin would not be cut off, nor could the Christ so born be described as the "Second Adam—the Lord from heaven."

Another man would have appeared among men, giving mankind the example of a beautiful human life, but unable in any other way to benefit the race of men. If the Son of Mary were indeed the Son of Joseph, too, He would assuredly have come into human being, as we come, a human person, separate and individual. But He would not have come as God made Man, one blessed Person for ever, so that it was the identically same Christ who for our sake came down from heaven, lived, suffered, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven. He would have come as a man, as a member of our race, but we could not look to Him as our Redeemer or Savior, nor as the author to us of a new spiritual life. He would be such that we could never say, looking up to Him who sits by the Father's side, as He sat there before the world was: "Thou wast made flesh for us; Thou didst die for us, and hast gained forgiveness of sin; Thou hast sanctified our sinful and corrupt nature through Thine immaculate and holy conception; Thou art able to be touched with our infirmities, for Thou wast tempted like as we are, yet without sin." All that wealth of everlasting comfort and good hope, which comes with the thought that the Son of God became Man, and gave Himself for our salvation, would disappear, if we could not believe in the Virgin-Birth of our Lord.

But can there be any doubt as to that? Look to Scripture. The very first declaration ever made of God on earth concerning our Lord and Savior testifies to the fact that He was born of a virgin. "I will put enmity," says Jehovah to the serpent-tempter, "between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen. 3:15. Mark well, it is the woman's seed, not the seed or an offspring of man, that shall bruise the head of the serpent and deliver fallen mankind from the power of the devil. He who was to come into this world to save mankind was not conceived and born after the fashion of man, "not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man," (John 1:13), but was conceived and born in a miraculous manner, born of a virgin.

Consider furthermore that great Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah: "The Lord himself will give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." This is none other than the child of wonder extolled in chapter 9:6,7: "For unto us a child is born, 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." What more proof do we need for the Virgin-Birth of our Lord? For this is the very prophecy quoted as fulfilled in Christ's birth in Matt. 1:22,23: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

Thus also the detailed story of the Annunciation of Mary as narrated in Luke 1 affirms, that Jesus, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, was born of a pure virgin, Mary of Nazareth, espoused to Joseph whose wife she afterwards became. The birth took place at Bethlehem, whither Joseph and Mary had gone for enrollment in a census that was being taken, while the announcement was made to Mary beforehand by an angel, when she was living at Nazareth. The fact is also emphasized, that when the time had come, Mary brought forth her first-born son, intimating that this is the One of whom the angel had spoken to her; "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Who that reflects on the narrative given in Matthew and Luke concerning the Virgin-Birth of Christ can fail to see that there must have been a miracle—the most stupendous miracle in the universe—this virgin? It was a divine Person—already existing—entering on this new mode of existence. He who was living with a full, vigorous, personal life for ages before He appeared in the world, who from all eternity was God, took upon Him our flesh, wrapped our human nature round His own Divine Person. Miracle could alone effect such a wonder. And because His human nature had this miraculous origin Christ is the Holy One from beginning, without taint of sin, the second Adam, who reverses the course of sin and death brought in by the first Adam, and establishes the kingdom of grace and salvation among mankind.

Let us hold fast the Virgin-Birth of our Lord, as the supreme wonder, tenderest consolation, and spring of hope which cannot possibly make ashamed!

J. J.

Almighty God, we bless Thee that Thou hast compassion upon our miserable estate, and for us hast given Thine only begotten Son to become man. We beseech Thee, graciously enlighten our hearts rightly to apprehend this comfort; to enjoy the same in every need and temptation; to praise Thee with all angels, and let us have peace that we may heartily rejoice, and so overcome all anguish and sorrow of this world. Amen.

—Loeche Seedgrains.

THE CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

Christmas, originally "Christes Masse" (the mass or church festival of Christ) is the English name for the day on which the birth of Jesus Christ is observed. It is one of the greatest festivals of the Christian church. It is universally observed in all Christian countries and in most of them is observed as a legal holiday. Though Christmas is now observed as a Christian festival, this period of the year has been an occasion for feasting and rejoicing by every race from the earliest times. The winter solstice, which occurs about December 22, is the time when the sun having reached its greatest declination, seems to pause and return on its course. The days which have been growing shorter and shorter now become longer, and the sun gives promise of the distant, but certain approach of spring. The worship of the sun formed a large part of the religion of the ancient pagan races, and it was therefore natural that this change in the sun's course should be hailed with rejoicing. Such celebrations were held by the ancient Egyptians, by the Greeks, the Romans, the Teutonic nations, and all the other and ancient races, and many of the features of our present Christmas celebration had their origin from the customs followed at these ancient festivals.

By the Romans the period of the winter solstice was celebrated under the title of the Saturnalia or festival of Saturn, the god who presided over agriculture and who was one of the principal deities of the Roman mythology. This festival was celebrated from December 17th to 24th, and was an occasion of general festivity and merry making. All labor was suspended, schools were closed, no punishments were inflicted. Distinction of rank was laid aside and the slaves were treated as equals. All classes exchanged gifts, the commonest being wax tapers and clay dolls. These dolls were especially used as gifts to children. The utmost license and disorder prevailed, and the name Saturnalia is now used to denote any occasion of riotous disorder or revelry.

In ancient Scandinavia, Germany, and Britain similar rejoicing took place at this season. By the Goths and Saxons this festival was named "Jul" or Yule, and this word is still used as synonymous with Christmas. During the Yule festival the Scandinavians kindled great fires in honor of their God, Thor. This is the origin of the Yule log which was formerly one of the principal ceremonies of the Christmas observance, and is still continued in many parts of England.

In ancient Germany this period was known as the "Twelve Nights," and began about December 25th and lasted till January 6th. This was religiously observed by numerous feasts, and was regarded by the

early Germans as one of the holiest and most solemn of their festivals.

While many of the customs connected with the observance of Christmas can be traced back to these pagan festivals, very little is known regarding the origin of our present Christmas, or when or where it was first celebrated. And no one knows whether December 25th is the date of Christ's birth. No date is given in the Bible, and while many theories concerning the matter have been brought forward, there is little foundation for any of them. The early Christians looked upon the celebration of birthdays as heathenish, and the birthday of Christ was no exception. After a time this prejudice died out, and the proper date for the observance of Christmas was sought by the church authorities. It was then found that the Western churches usually observed it on December 25th, and the Eastern churches on January 6th. The custom of the Western finally prevailed, and both religious bodies agreed to hold the anniversary on the same date. The exact time when this result was accomplished is not known, but the best authorities state that the fixing of December 25th as the date for Christmas was the act of Julius I., who was pope from 337 to 352 A. D. By the end of the fourth century this date was accepted by all nations of Christendom and Christmas has been observed on December 25th ever since. In Russia it is celebrated on January 7th. This, however, is owing to the fact that the Russians use the Old Style calendar which makes December 25th fall twelve days later than with us.

From a Monograph by E. Miller.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Little is known regarding the origin of the Christmas tree, but it was probably derived from some of the forms of tree worship which were common in the early pagan religions. There are a number of instances of the use of trees in connection with the ancient winter festivals. During the Roman Saturnalia it was customary to take pine trees, decorate them with images and place lighted tapers on them. The Christmas tree may have been suggested by the sacred tree of Scandinavian mythology. This was supposed to embrace within its roots and branches the entire universe. In ancient Egypt the palm tree was considered sacred and was used as a symbol in their ceremonies at the time of the winter solstice.

These and many other explanations are given of the origin of the Christmas tree, but it is not known whether the early Christians adopted any of these customs, nor is it known when the Christmas tree was first used. It is known that trees with lighted candles were used on several occasions during the Middle Ages in connection with Christmas. Such a tree is

described as being used in a Christmas pageant in England during the reign of Henry VIII., but it differed from the modern tree as it bore no presents. The earliest authentic reference to a Christmas tree is in a manuscript dated 1608, contained in a private library in Germany. This was written by a citizen of Strasburg, Germany, and mentions a tree lighted with candles and hung with presents as being a regular feature of the Christmas celebration at that time.

The custom spread to the neighboring cities along the Rhine, but seems to have been confined to that district till about the beginning of the nineteenth century, when it made its appearance in other sections and in a short time was common all over Germany. It was introduced into England about 1841 by Prince Albert, shortly after his marriage to Queen Victoria. In America the Christmas tree was brought over by the German emigrants at quite an early date.

From "Christmas" by E. Miller.

THE NEW HYMNAL

The editor of the new hymnal begs to acknowledge receipt of a number of communications from ministers, laymen, organists and professional musicians, who have offered suggestions and thus shown an active interest in the work—in fact have become collaborators. Some of the ideas presented are good; others are less so, but they are of all the more negative value; false ideas not only serve to call attention to the corresponding truths, but they often serve to suggest good ideas. At any rate it is encouraging to see that the notice in the Northwestern Lutheran has elicited correspondence from three different states, from men and women engaged in various professions, and on various subjects relating to hymnology in general as well as our present work in particular.

Of the suggestions so far offered we will mention only a few at this time, reserving some of the others for more exhaustive replies.

"Gloria in Excelsis" has been suggested as a title for the book. Certainly a very appropriate title. While there is plenty of time to select a title, we shall be very glad to hear from others who may have something better to submit.

One organist would like to have the repeated strains printed twice, instead of using repetition marks. This would hardly be feasible, because it would increase the size of the book very considerably. It is true that organists sometimes forget to repeat, or play the repeat too often, but there would have to be a very general demand to authorize an innovation of this kind.

To print the music on the upper half of the page and the text on the lower half, and to cut the page in two, so that by turning over either one of the sections

the reader or player may put the text and any desired tune directly before him, can be done, as it has been done, in the case of chants and hymns of only a few lines. But what about the longer hymns? Moreover, the arrangement of the hymns in a hymnal cannot be based primarily on the metre; i. e. it would not do to put all the hymns of one and the same metre together in one part of the book, irrespective of the contents of the hymns.

One of our correspondents suffers a great amount of irritation by the use of a hymnal in which the index gives the hymns by page instead of number. We can assure him that we shall use the number method.

Another writer calls attention to the fact that some of the German chorals are pitched too high for the average voice, especially the average male voice. Having been endowed with a mere bass voice ourselves, we find this criticism particularly to the point and we promise to do all we can to alleviate the sufferings of those in the same class with us.

Any co-operation is heartily welcome. The loan of books, in the case of rare ones, is also greatly appreciated, but books that are still in the market are amply supplied by the Northwestern Publishing House; if there is any such book that you would call our attention to just give us the title and publisher, and we will get it.

O. H.

DO YOU EVER GO?

The Kansas "Phoenix" remarks:

It is peculiar that a man who owns a bunch of cattle will go out to look at them every few days, but not once during the whole year will you catch him at the schoolhouse where his children are getting their education.

If you visit your church school you will profit in two things, at least: you will find out a little about your children's education at first hand, and you will discover that many, if not all, of your fears about the shortcomings of the church school are entirely unfounded and that at the present day it is often to be preferred to any other school, as a school—not considering the vital religious instruction at all.

CROSSES

As perchance carvers do not faces make,
But that away which hid them there do take;
Let crosses so take what hid Christ in thee,
And be His image, or not His, but He.

—Dean John Donne.

"Sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions."
—Dodd.

A Letter to a Preacher

Your sermon tonight, though perfectly true as far as it went, failed in this respect: the mercy of God in the gift of the Lord Jesus was not mentioned. Though you urged the need of salvation, the unconverted man left the church as ignorant of the way of salvation as when he entered it. Oh, do forgive me for writing with so little reserve; but seeing as I do, every day, how much the Lord owns the simple proclamation of the full Gospel, I feel constrained to press upon you the importance of preaching in every sermon that which, by the grace of God and the teaching of his Spirit, can, and will make your hearers wise unto salvation. In every sermon tell of sin and its consequences; tell of what Christ has done for the sinner, of the punishment laid upon him, of the atonement made, the righteousness imputed, and the peace and good works which follow the simple acceptance of the salvation thus provided. These are the elements of the Gospel of Christ, and therefore preachers often take it for granted that their hearers know them well, whereas a very large number may be virtually ignorant of them. I feel sometimes overwhelmed with the responsibility of those who stand up to preach to men who in a short time must be in eternity. To the preacher, Christ is precious, yet he frequently only speaks of repentance, of the danger of delay, of the blessings of "religion," of good works, perhaps of faith in the abstract. These are all right and good, but these alone will not save. The men before him are dying—this may be their last opportunity of hearing any message from God. Oh! why does he not give at least a part of his sermon to tell how the Lord Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, and how he procured this salvation with his own blood? He has said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Surely, if all who know him did thus "lift" him up from Sunday to Sunday, we should not hear so many lament that they see no fruit of their ministry.—Evang. Messenger.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Christmas Charities

Hospitality, charitable gifts and the exchange of presents have always had a prominent place in the Christmas observances. During the Christmas holidays in the Middle Ages the hospitality and charity was of the most lavish description. We read of three hundred guests sitting down to a Christmas dinner given by one of the great barons, and feasts such as these were common. But the early charities were nothing in comparison to our modern Christmas giving. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are collected each year and given to the needy, and spent for dinners, and for presents for poor children. The various charitable societies give monster dinners to the homeless and distribute food, clothing, and toys to poor families. A recent and somewhat novel way of raising money at Christmas time for this and similar purposes

is the use of the Christmas seal or stamp. They are sold throughout our country and are affixed to Christmas packages or used for decorations. They were first used in December, 1907, but the idea was derived from Denmark where for many years the government has issued a Christmas stamp which is sold at the post offices for the benefit of the hospitals for children suffering from tuberculosis.

Some Curious Beliefs

There are many curious beliefs and superstitions connected with Christmas. In many countries in Europe it is thought that on Christmas eve cattle kneel down in worship; that the bees sing, and the sheep go in procession in commemoration of the visit of the angel to the shepherds. It is also believed that horses and cattle have the power of speech on Christmas eve. In Poland and some other places it is believed that on Christmas night the heavens are opened and the scene of Jacob's ladder is re-enacted. In certain parts of Austria candles are put in the windows to light the path of the Christ child as He passes through the streets. Wherever a church has stood, although no trace of it remains, it is thought that the sound of bells and singing may be heard on Christmas eve. There is a superstition that on this one night of the year the lost spirits have rest. Judas Iscariot may sleep, Herod and Pontius Pilate may have relief from their torments, and the wandering Jew ceases his weary tramp. In some parts of Germany there is a belief that the Savior comes to earth in the guise of a poor boy and begs from door to door, and on Christmas day no beggar is refused food and shelter.

CULLED BY THE WAY

One on the Methodists

An old negro near Victoria, Tex., who was the only Baptist in the vicinity, always "stuck up for his own faith," and was ready with a reason for it, although he was unable to read a word. This, the New York Methodist Christian Advocate relates, was the way he "put 'em down:"

"Yo' kin read, now kain't yo'?"

"Yes."

"Well, I s'pose yo' read a Bible hain't you'?"

"Yes."

"Yo' read 'bout John de Baptis, hain't yo'?"

"Yes."

"Well, yo' never read 'bout John de Mefodis', did yo'?"

Not What He Wanted

A clergyman catechising a Sunday school, when comparing himself—the pastor of the church to a shepherd and his congregation to the sheep, put the question to the children: "What does the shepherd do for the sheep?"

A small boy in the front row piped out:

"Shears 'em!"

How He Made His Sermons

A famous clergyman tells of a lay preachers' conference in which a veteran described his method of sermon preparation.

"I take my text," he said, "and divide my sermon into three parts. In the first part I tell 'em what I'm going to tell 'em. In the second part—well, I tell 'em. In the third part I tell 'em what I've told 'em."