

The Message of Christmas

IT WAS such a long time ago when the Child was born to a Chosen One in a manger in Bethlehem. The circumstances of that Child's birth were a preamble to the utter humility that characterized His life and ways; those circumstances preluded the all-abiding love upon which He was to preach the Gospel of His Father. And not less significant, is the message that each little incident of that great event affords to humankind.

The tedious trek of the Three Kings from the Far East was not to prove the sturdiness of Asian physique or the endurance of camels in desert journeys. Not mentioning the oft-repeated meanings that are attached to the gifts they brought, their journeys adequately defined the kind of devotion that Christmas should pay to God.

The Kings could have discussed the merits of the prophecy while on their way if only to let them momentarily forget physical fatigue; they could have wondered on the plausibility of His coming; they could have flouted such a forecast, as modern man is wont to do, for its apparent lack of scientific basis. Christian history would have been different. But no, they rode on . . . unflinching, doubtless, unquestioning!

Modern man proceeds with axioms; he would honor God only in the light of scientific facts, refusing to believe that which is not, that which cannot be, proved scientifically — and he prefers to walk in the shadows of doubt while he tries to measure in his little head the immensities of the Universe. Man gropes in the darkness of doubt; doubt, he says, is the beginning of wisdom.

But where ends wisdom? Man doesn't seem to know.

Kings lead; the throng follows. People should obey the king not because he is a good king but because he is their king. Long live the king! The people? let them starve! But give the king the best of everything. Let him sleep in a soft-cushioned bed the board of which comes from the forest of China, the matrix design done by the finest craftsmen of Eighbur, and the gold etchings around the edges by the renowned artists of the land. Let not a single fly enter his room — that fly may ink the king, interrupt his sound snoring!

But here was the King of all kings Who spent His first night in His Kingdom with the littlest comfort, if any, among the lowly, in a manger. Did He choose that way because a king must know the sufferings of the poor who constitute the majority of his people? Possibly. For human kings to think over.

Is not a government for the benefit of the many, and not for the pleasure of the few? Let Him live therefore as a poor. Let the innkeepers refuse Him room; no, don't send them to the guillotine. My kingdom, says this King, is founded on love. Let those lumbkins stay where they are: do not drive them away into the night to get lost. Their whinnies do not disturb Him at all. I am a good Shepherd too, says this King.

Has man forgotten, or has he ignored, these morals of the Nativity in his frantic struggle for existence? If he has not, why has he set a time for everything — letting God wait on Sundays and Holy Days? Outside of these, why does maninker with the chemical equation of the earth? Why does he gloat with pride in being able to launch a man-made moon, instead of humble offering such achievement as a tribute, not a challenge, to God? Why does man ponder well in the wee hours of the night in his search for a weapon that



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will instill fear instead of love in the enemy? Why does he plot business maneuvers designed to begot more pesos to his pockets at the expense of his fellowmen?

This, because man has made Christmas only a date in the calendar.

And today, being Christmas, man looks at the world with a morning eye, so they say, with the innocence of a child's heart. His heart, according to his custom, should bear no hatred, no envy, no grudges — nothing loathsome. And so, he has his heart filled with overflowing love; he reaches into his pockets without hesitation and he gives to the poor freely — he remembers his friends, the non-influential friends included. This

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is that season, according to the calendar. It's only once a year anyway!

Tomorrow, man will resume his usual ways. Tomorrow is another day. It's no longer Christmas. Why, look at the calendar!

Yes, indeed, it was such a long time ago when the Child was born to the Chosen One in a manger, among the lowly, in Bethlehem. But despite the years, man has not fully learned the lesson and the significance of that birth. Man has only made Christmas a season in the calendar, not a season in the heart. Man should know that there will be no second Nativity; He promised to return but only to judge the living and the dead! §