Last Week of the Christmas Special Sale.

WE ARE SACRIFICING A STOCK VALUED AT $100,000.00, But we must get rid of it by December 24th. We are selling Pianos, uprights of the finest makes, at figures that will cause you to pause and think. Look! One lot at $195. This Piano is worth $275. One lot of beautiful Upright Pianos at $269, during this sale. This is a $350 value. One lot at $315. These are magnificent. The finest production of the Piano Maker's Art in an Upright Piano, is offered during this holiday sale at $413. They are practically new, having been rented a little while. Then think of the price. This is a $600 Piano. There are only a few left. This is an opportunity of a lifetime. Terms on the above make it easy for you. $6, $7, $8 and $10 per month, are what we are offering. We always look out for your pocketbook and make the terms to suit the conditions. Make your purchase now. It will be delivered when you wish between now and Xmas eve.

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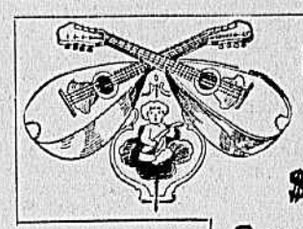

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Practical Christmas Lessons Drawn By Richmond Pastors.

REV. JOSEPH MAGRI, St Peter's Cathedral.

REV. W. J. YOUNG, D. D., Centenary Methodist.

REV. RUSSELL CECIL, D. D., Second Presbyterian.

REV. HENRY PEARCE ATKINS, West-End Christian.

REV WESTON BRUNER, D. D., Calvary Baptist.

(BY REV. JOS. MAGRI, A. M., S. T. L.)

A CAVE, a manger, a God-man! The cross, death of the God-man, redemption!

Such is in brief the old, old story, the story with whose recital the Christian world never tires. It is a story in two parts; the one tells of joy, yet privation; the other of sorrow, yet triumph.

Ours is a message of joy. Ours it is to narrate the first chapter in the wondrous story of love. The cave, the manger, the Infant God-man—these shall be our theme.

The beautiful words of the learned Abbe Fouard, in his admirable life of Christ, will enable us to appreciate and to approach in the proper spirit our holy subject.

"In the simple story of the gospel," says he, "there is no outward pomp; all the glory of the crib lies in its inherent loveliness. It is only the soul that is illuminated by it; 'tis to the heart alone it speaks. Furthermore, we must not forget that here, by anything we add to the majesty of Christ, we detract just so much from His love. The Word in order to save us, has not disdained the womb of a Virgin; why then should we blush at the lowliness of our God? The more profound it appears, the more it forces us to love Him."

To the cry of the impious Marcion, in the very first ages of Christianity, that the swathing-bands and the manger were unworthy of a God of adoration, the erudite Tertullian replied: "Nothing is more worthy of a God than that, in order to save man, He should trample under foot our perishable grandeur, and so adjudge earthly joys unworthy of Himself and His."

Shepherds and Their Heavenly Visitants.

But to our wondrous story. The privilege of anticipating the most joyous of feast days itself is ours.

'Tis the first Christmas morn. The stars are still visible in the heavens. The dawn has not yet appeared. In that far-off country, the scene of the redemption, a group of lowly shepherds are keeping the watch over their flocks.

Suddenly they are seized with a great terror. An angel of the Lord appears to them, and the glory of the Lord shines round about them. "Be not affrighted," says the heavenly messenger, "I am come to announce good tidings of great joy unto you and unto all your people. To-day, in the city of David is born to you a Saviour, the Christ, the Lord; and behold the sign by which you shall know Him: You shall find an Infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger."

The inmost souls of the humble shepherds are set on fire by these astounding words. With fear dispelled, they look up. Instead of one, they now behold a myriad of heavenly spirits. The air resounds with celestial harmony. In their ears ring these words of joy and good tidings, words that, for nearly two thousand years, have been echoed and re-echoed throughout the centuries: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will!"

Pilgrimage With the Shepherds.

Let us to-day with the shepherds "go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord has shewed to us." Ah! what do we behold? There before us in the cave. We enter and fall upon our knees. We look around us. Our eyes rest upon two dumb animals whose breath gives the only warmth that exists in the place. And there are the shepherds, their knees bent in adoration, their eyes riveted upon the one object of their admiration. A venerable man standing reverently, with staff in hand, and eyes turned heavenward, is wrapped in fervent thanksgiving. A maiden mother, the purest of the daughters of Eve, with clasped hands and in silent adoration, bends over a manger; and in that manger is a little child, bearing the likeness of that fond mother.

There is nothing to distinguish its tiny body from that of other infants, save two things. One is its remarkable beauty, for he is the most beautiful of the sons of men. The other is the look of extraordinary intelligence that flashes from its eyes. And who is that tiny, that helpless-looking infant? It is evident that He is man. Aye, man indeed; but that little Babe, born in poverty and lying in that exposed cavern is more than man—He is God! The God of Might! The God of Majesty! The God of Power! The promised Redeemer is come! The Christ! The Anointer! The Messiah! And His name is Jesus!

Venite Adoremus Dominum.

O! dear Jesus, it is really Thou—our Lord, our Master, our Loved one! We hasten to adore Thee, our Infant God! Venite adoremus Dominum! We gather around Thy crib to-day with feelings of surpassing joy that Thou hast come into the world to save us! Our minds would go still farther and picture Thee bearing willingly the heavy cross Thou art to assume, loaded with our sins. But, no! we will not think of the cruel treatment Thou art soon to receive at the hands of wicked world. For Thou art to-day amongst us a smiling babe, and our thoughts are those of joy, of gladness.

We have come with the humble shepherds in spirit to Thy crib, and like them we offer Thee that which Thou desirest most—we give Thee our hearts! For is not the heart the symbol of love, and art not Thou the God of Love? Else why didst Thou come as a little child? For can any one help but love Thy tender little innocents? And art Thou not going to give us a later example of Thy paternal love for the young, when Thou shalt gather around Thee thy little friends, and say to them, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven?" and art Thou not going to say to us also "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven?"

We rejoice, then, to-day with all the joy of which our hearts are capable! We rejoice because salvation is begun. We rejoice because of the good Thou bringest into the world! We rejoice because Thou art one of us, and hast come to make Thy abode with men!

Thou Art the Christ.

And we have come to Thee to-day with confidence that Thou art all powerful, and can and will hear our fervent prayers. For, in the words of St. Peter, "If we do not go to Thee, 'to whom else, Lord, shall we go?' "And we have believed and have known," and do believe now and know "that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God!"

Verily, that little infant in our midst is He before whom all will one day, freely or not, bend the knee in adoration. It is the Messiah, the great eternal High Priest, the Christ, the God-made man! It is He who will later on astound Judea and the world by His countless miracles! It is He who will confound His enemies by the declaration: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will rebuild it!" It is He who will conquer death and hell by bursting triumphantly from the grave with body glorified, incorruptible, impassible! It is He who with divine authority will say to His Apostles, "As the Father has sent me, so do I send you. Go ye into the whole world, teach all nations—teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you!"

It is He who will one day come to judge all men—aye, even the enemies who dared to judge Him—the Lord of All!

Effects of the Incarnation.

And what is taking place beyond our earthly sphere? In hell there reigns a veritable pandemonium of confusion. Lucifer and his followers suspect that the infant born in that stable is truly the promised, the long-expected Redeemer. They only suspect, because their knowledge is only conjectural; and founded on the wonderful effects accompanying the birth of the Saviour. Let Lucifer has an innate feeling that he is conquered. Some intuition seems to tell him that the Seed of her who is to crush the serpent's head has at last come into the world. In consequence hell is one wild scene of rage, confusion, terror!

It is a relief to turn our eyes from the frightened, the despairing demons, to the realms of blessedness above. The heavenly courts and mansions are flooded with a sea of celestial harmony. The Heavenly Father looks down upon that far-off cave and its occupants with the tenderest complacency. The Holy Ghost is shedding from on high the divine rays of His irrepressible love. The Cherubim, the Serahpim, the Thrones, the Dominations, the Powers, the Virtues, the Principalities, the Archangels, the Angels—all fall in adoration of the Infant God-man, and, with longing eyes, gaze earthward towards the humble crib. The heavens resound with the glad cry: Holy! Holy!! Holy!!! Lord God Almighty! Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest! Praise forevermore to the Redeemer born this day to men!

"On Earth—Peace to Men of Good Will."

Such is the scene in the abode of the Blessed. And on earth what do we behold? The great Roman world is at peace. The proud Caesar sleeps totally unconscious of a greater than he who has come upon this sphere of ours. The haughty Herod is disturbed, it is true, yet, scarcely understands the significance of what has transpired at Bethlehem. The world in general knows little of the coming of the Messiah. There are, however, a few faithful souls in Israel yearning for the advent of the Redeemer, and amongst them we find Holy Simeon, Joachim, Ann, Zachary, Elizabeth, Anna, the prophetess, and last, but not least, John the Baptist. It is still Christmas night, and as yet these holy personages are unaware of the birth of the Saviour. But the three Magi in a far off country have seen the star of Bethlehem, and have at once begun their journey in quest of the Infant Christ.

And around the crib at Bethlehem are a legion of unseen heavenly worshippers. But they are not more attentive or more devout than the earthly adorers who surround the Infant God. There are the two dumb animals, which tradition tells us were present at the birth of the Saviour. Nearby kneel the simple but reverent shepherds. There stands St. Joseph in a prayerful attitude; and next him, the sweetest, the purest, the best of mothers, bending over and caressing her Son and her God.

With a look of indescribable love, she raises in her arms the Divine Infant, and, kissing His baby brow, presses Him to her heart. She must," says Bossout, "cloak the new Adam from the cold winter air; reverence, too, bade her clothe the Babe, as well as did necessity.

"Cover Him, Mary, cover that tender Baby body; shield Him in thy maiden bosom! Dost understand thy motherhood? Has thou not any perturbation at beholding this thine infant One? Hast thou no fear to bare unto Him thy maternal breasts? For what Child is this, who reaches up to thee His divine hands? Adore Him, and whilst thou dost nourish Him, let the angels summon new hosts of invisible worshippers."

Impress the above picture upon your mind so that it will never be effaced! Gaze upon the scene here depicted and draw from it the lesson taught through it by the Infant God of Love! And whilst you are gazing try to realize the import of these words addressed to the lowly shepherds, and through them to you and to me: "Behold! I bring to you good tidings of great joy * * * For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ, the Lord, in the city of David. * * * Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will!" Luke II:10-14.

Jos. Magri.

NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

Longest of the Year, But Filled With Dreams of Good Things to Come.

By Rev. W. J. Young, D. D.

How long this night seems! The longest of the year to the children! But filled with dreams of good things to come—dreams that in some sense will come true, for in these better days, even in the poorest homes, the children are not forgotten, and there is an effort to have them write their letters to Santa Claus, that their wishes may be known.

That period before Jesus came into the world was the long night before the world's first Christmas. It, too, was a night filled with yearnings, in which the world was led on by the Great Father to give expression to its own needs—needs which were to be met in the Redeemer of mankind. The theologians say that Jesus fulfilled Jewish prophecy. But what was Jewish prophecy, but an expression of the ambitions and hopes of the most "God intoxicated" people of ancient times? The Hebrew prophet, like the poets and other seers of these later days, interpreted that which existed in but dim outline in the minds of the masses of the people.

Nor was this fulfillment confined to the Hebrew longings. In the writings of the poets and sages of those races which the Jews were pleased to call Gentile, we detect the same fond desires, more clearly interpreted by the Hebrew prophets. They, too, felt the world was out of joint, and that the last word concerning human life was yet to be spoken. Here was one reason why the great apostle to the Gentiles found such ready access to the minds of the people, wherever he went.

Sometimes we hear our Christmas customs criticised, because to so large a degree they are of heathen origin—the tree, the lights, the Santa Claus myth, and even the giving of gifts, and the joyousness. But let us not forget that in these prevailing customs we have but another proof that Jesus fills with a new meaning, the ideals and deeds of men. Were not these festivals of our heathen ancestors prophecies of better days and better ways?

The annual return of the Christmas season brings to our minds the thought, that the world is again and again having its long night of preparation for some blessed Christmas morning, filled with a better conception of human life and liberty, and with some larger experience in the things pure and divine.

Even in these days, men everywhere are feeling that some better day is near at hand in the world's life—a better day particularly for the oppressed, and the humble. We have reason to believe that these feelings, too, are prophecies of what God will do for us through the longer reign of Jesus.

Jesus spoke of heathen and the endless life. What music is his words, "I go to prepare a place for you." Blessed will be that Christmas day, filled with all good things—yea and life forevermore!

W. J. Young.

IS AN INSPIRATION.

Christmas Commemoration of the Most Significant Fact in History of Our Race.

By Rev. Russell Cecil, D. D.

Christmas is an inspiration. It is commemmorative of the most deeply significant fact in the history of the human race, the incarnation of the Son of God. The conviction that God was manifest in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ, and that he was Immanuel, or God with us, is the most elevating thought that has ever found hospitable lodgment in the human mind.

How it dignifies mankind! Man is not simply an evanescent creature. Through whatever natural processes, under the creative hand of God, he may have come into conscious existence, he is not a mere temporary being, whose breath is in his nostrils to day, and to-morrow disappears in the abyss of annihilation, but he is to be numbered with the immortals, and through the incarnation his nature has been lifted up into unison with the nature of the infinite God.

What hopefulness this thought inspires in men! No man need despair. God has come down into human flesh that heaven-born hope might spring up in the breast of him who lies buried beneath the ruins of earthly aspiration and joys, and lift him into the higher and holier atmosphere of the divine love and service. There is hope for any man while it remains true that by faith he may be made a partaker of the divine nature!

How encouraging also is the thought of the incarnation! It ought to stir the soul of the most humble and despondent human being that lives. There is something in life and something in the future for every one who in loving confidence will come close up to Immanuel, who in compassion has come close down to us. He is the common meeting ground for God and man, and any one who desires to know who and what God is may have his questions answered in him. The thought of this kinship with God has stimulated multitudes in generations past to deeds of heroism, and it nurses many a heart to bravely face the future.

Is not the incarnation the greatest spur to human progress? Under the aegis of the gospel, the ne plus ultra of the ancient civilizations has long since been abbreviated by the elision of the negative, and the plus ultra of modern aspiration, like the star of Bethlehem to the oriental magi, continues to beckon men on to an endless development. Why should those who are in unison and communion with God through the Lord Jesus Christ despair of any attainment? But rob men of this thought, and the strongest impulse to endeavor will be paralized and human progress arrested.

Christmas therefore should not be celebrated by Bacchanalian revels, but by thanksgiving and praise, by consecrated devotion, and by the cultivation of such thoughts as shall bind us closer to the God of glory, who has stooped down to lift us up into unison with himself.

Russell Cecil

EFFECT OF CHRISTMAS.

We Learn the Truth of the Master's Words, "It is More Blessed to Give Than to Receive."

This is the season of the year in which we learn the truth of the Master's words—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." It may be that we do not mean to learn it, but it is taught to us nevertheless. The cheer of Christmas-tide brings a smile to the face of the solemn man, a greeting to the lips of the silent man, a hope to the heart of the discouraged man, and a blessed good-will to the spirits of all.

The home is changed, for Kindness is supreme. The neighborhood is happier, for the more fortunate are playing the part of St. Nicholas to the children of the poor. And whether they realize it or not, the simple presents that the poor are giving and the costly gifts the rich bestow are giving them a taste of Christ's blessedness, and teaching them the Master's holy truth.

If it be a lesson worth learning once in a twelvemonth, may it not be worth the practice every day? With what reason does the spirit of Kindness reign only at the Christmas season? If selfishness is out of place in the secret order now, what gives it place again when these days of joy are over? If home and office and neighborhood are brighter for the remembrance of the Christ-child, will they not be always happier for the daily practice of His spirit. Let us have the Christmas with its gifts and remembrances once in every year, and a Christmas with its spirit of good-will and charity every day!

Henry Pearce Atkins

A GLORIOUS SPECTACLE.

All of Christendom Gathers Around the Blessed Christ in Adoration, Praise and Prayer.

By Rev. Weston Bruner, D. D.

"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, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."—Is. 9: 6.

"Wonderful! Wonderful!
Ring out the name, O Christmas chimes,
Wonderful! Wonderful!
Echo the words to the farthest climes!
May the splendor of this great Name
Shine and glow with a mighty flame,
Filling the life with its glorious rays,
Filling thy spirit with Christmas praise."

What a glorious spectacle would be the whole world bowed in fervent adoration and humble prayer! Heavenly spectators would gaze with raptuous joy, and angelic messengers would herald the glad tidings from star to star. Well, at this season of the year almost all of Christendom does gather around the blessed Christ of God in adoration, prayer and praise, joining in heart, if not in voice, with that multitude of the Heavenly Host, who sang, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good will to men." Christmas should be the Christian's happiest day. It should begin with prayer and praise, the joy increasing as the day proceeds.

"Joy to the world, the Lord has come,
Let earth receive her King."

It was a vision of the Christ and the Christmas day, that led the great prophet of old to speak in such rapturous language the words of our text: "For unto us a child is born, a son is given: * * and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, * * the Prince of Peace." Yes, He is the Prince of Peace. His very name is a sure prophecy of the reign of universal peace. Its the crimson light in the Eastern sky, heralding the coming day.

"Out of the darkness of the night,
The world bursts into light—
It's daybreak everywhere."

The world's peace is coming, for the "Prince of Peace has come. Christmas, or the Christ is God, greatest gift to men—"the unspeakable gift." Hence the Christmas idea of gifts—of giving to kith and kin—and the beautiful custom of the sympathetic distribution of alms have become well nigh universal. We may not be fully agreed as to doctrines and creeds, but we know no division as we bring our gifts of fragrant praise and devout adoration to the blessed Son of Mary and Son of God, at this happy Christmas time. But the best gift we can offer is our own heart in glad surrender to Him, and our own life in willing service to His. Then shall our souls be glad with the joy the shepherds felt as on the hills of Bethlehem they heard the anthem of the angels, on that first Christmas morn.

"Christ is come to be thy light,
Shining through the darkest night;
He will make thy pilgrim way
Shine unto the perfect day.
Take the messenger! let it be
Full of Christmas joy to thee."

Let us add so much of sweetness and brightness, and beauty to life, that each day shall be full of the joy of the Christmas time!

Weston Bruner.

CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO RAILWAY

Christmas Holiday Rates.

Holiday excursion tickets will be sold to the public on December 22d, 23d, 24th, 25th, 30th, 31st and January 1st at one and a third fare between all Chesapeake and Ohio stations; and at one and one-third fare, plus twenty-five cents, to Southeastern Passenger Association territory, limited to January 4th.

To students and teachers going home for the holidays, on presenting and surrendering to agent certificate of president, principal or superintendent of institution, the holiday tickets will be sold on December 16th to 24th, and limited for return to January 8th.

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