OPINION

We are Americans, and as Americans we would speak to America.—FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

Pearl of Great Price

(Excerpts from Van Dyke's Christmas story, "The Other Wise Man"—who set out with three jewels for the Child Jesus in Bethlehem. The first he gave to take care of a man dying by the roadside. The second went as a bribe to Roman soldiers about to kill a young child whom they thought to be Jesus. Here is the story of the third jewel.)

Three and thirty years of the life of Artaban had passed away, and he was still a pilgrim, and a seeker after light. His hair, once darker than the cliffs of Zagros, was now as white as the wintry snow that covered them. His eyes, that once flashed like flames of fire, were dull as embers smouldering among the ashes.

Worn and weary and ready to die, but still looking for the King, he had come for the last time to Jerusalem. He had often visited the holy city before, and had searched through all its lanes and crowded hovels and black prisons without finding any trace of the family of Nazarenes who had fled from Bethlehem long ago.

But now it seemed as if he must make one more effort, and something whispered in his heart that, at last, he might succeed.

It was the season of the Passover. The city was thronged with strangers. The children of Israel, scattered in far lands all over the world, had returned to the Temple for the great feast, and there had been a confusion of tongues in the narrow streets for many days.

City Aroused Over Execution

But on this day there was a singular agitation visible in the multitude. The sky was veiled with a portentous gloom and currents of excitement seemed to flash through the crowd like the thrill which shakes the forest on the eve of a storm.

A secret tide was sweeping them all one way. The clatter of sandals, and the soft, thick sound of thousands of bare feet shuffling over the stones, flowed unceasingly along the street that leads to the Damascus Gate.

Artaban joined company with a group of people from his own country, Parthian Jews who had come up to keep Passover, and inquired of them the cause of the tumult, and where they were going.

"We are going," they answered, "to the place called Golgotha, outside the city walls, where there is to be an execution. Have you not heard what has happened?

"Two famous robbers are to be crucified, and with them another, called Jesus of Nazareth, a man who has done many wonderful works among the people, so that they love him greatly. But the priests and elders have said that he must die, because he gave himself out to be the Son of God. And Pilate has sent him to the cross because he said that he was the 'King of the Jews.'"

How strangely these familiar words fell upon the tired heart of Artaban! They had led him for a lifetime over land and sea. And now they came to him darkly and mysteriously like a message of despair.

The King had arisen, but He had been denied and cast out. He was about to perish. Perhaps he was already dying. Could it be the same who had been born in Bethlehem thirty-three years ago, at whose birth the star had appeared in heaven, and of whose coming the prophets had spoken?

Hopes Pearl May Save His King

Artaban's heart beat unsteadily with that troubled, doubtful apprehension which is the excitement of old age. But he said within himself: "The ways of God are stranger than the thoughts of men, and it may be that I shall find the King, at last, in the hands of His enemies, and shall come in time to offer my pearl for his ransom before He dies."

So the old man followed the multitude with slow and painful steps toward the Damascus gate of the city. Just beyond the entrance of the guard-house a troop of Macedonian soldiers came down the street, dragging a young girl with torn dress and dishevelled hair.

As the Magian paused to look at her with compassion, she broke suddenly from the hands of her tormentors and threw herself at his feet, clasping him around the knees. She had seen his white cap and the winged circle on his breast.

Girl Pleads for Help

"Have pity on me," she cried, "and save me, for the sake of the God of purity! I also am a daughter of the true religion which is taught by the Magi. My father was a merchant of Parthia, but he is dead, and I am seized for his debts to be sold as a slave. Save me from worse than death."

Artaban trembled.

It was the old conflict in his soul, which had come to him in the palm-grove of Babylon and in the cottage at Bethlehem—the conflict between the expectation of faith and the impulse of love.

Twice the gift which he had consecrated to the worship of religion had been drawn from his hand to the service of humanity. This was the third trial, the ultimate probation, the final and irrevocable choice.

Was it his great opportunity or his last temptation? He could not tell. One thing only was clear in the darkness of his mind—it was inevitable. And does not the inevitable come from God?

One thing only was sure to his divided heart—to rescue this helpless girl would be a true deed of love. And is not love the light of the soul?

Artaban Parts with Treasure

He took the pearl from his bosom. Never had it seemed so luminous, so radiant, so full of tender, living lustre. He laid it in the hand of the slave.

"This is thy ransom, daughter! It is the last of my treasures which I kept for the King."

While he spoke the darkness of the sky thickened, and shuddering tremors ran through the earth, heaving convulsively like the beat of one who struggles with mighty grief.

The walls of the houses rocked to and fro. Stones were loosened and crashed into the street. Dust clouds filled the air. The soldiers fled in terror, reeling like drunken men. But Artaban and the girl whom he had ransomed crouched helpless beneath the wall of the Praetorium.

Good Deed Brings Peace

What had he to fear? What had he to live for? He had given away the last remnant of his tribute for the King. He had parted with the last hope of finding Him. The quest was over, and it had failed.

But even in that thought, accepted and embraced, there was peace. It was not resignation. It was not submission. It was something more profound and searching. He knew that all was well, because he had done the best that he could, from day to day.

He had been true to the light that had been given to him. He had looked for more. And if he had not found it, if a failure was all that came out of his life, doubtless that was the best that was possible. He had not seen the revelation of "life everlasting, incorruptible and immortal." But he knew that even if he could live his earthly life over again, it could not be otherwise than it had been.

One more lingering pulsation of the earthquake quivered through the ground. A heavy tile, shaken from the roof, fell and struck the old man on the temple. He lay breathless and pale, with his gray head resting on the young girl's shoulder, and the blood trickling from the wound.

As she bent over him, fearing that he was dead, there came a voice through the twilight, very small and still, like music sounding from a distance, in which the notes are clear but the words are lost. The girl turned to see if some one had spoken from the window above them, but she saw no one.

Life's Search Ended

Then the old man's lips began to move, as if in answer, and she heard him say in the Parthian tongue:

"Not so, my Lord: For when saw I thee an hungered and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw I thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? When saw I thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee? Three and thirty years have I looked for thee; but I have never seen thy face, nor ministered to thee, my King."

He ceased, and the sweet voice came again. And again the maid heard it, very faintly and far away. But now it seemed as though she understood the words:

"Verily I say unto thee. Inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, thou hast done it unto me."

A calm radiance of wonder and joy lighted the pale face of Artaban like the first ray of dawn on a snowy mountain-peak. One long, last breath of relief exhaled gently from his lips.

His journey was ended. His treasures were accepted. The other Wise Man had found the King.

A Pledge and a Prayer

Enjoy Holiday in Moderation

Have a Merry Christmas, but don't let the strain and excitement of the season undermine your health," Dr. R. H. Riley, director of the State department of health, advises this week.

"Unless you make a real effort to preserve moderation in all things, there is danger that holiday activities will decrease physical fitness and lower your resistance to disease.

"Remember it is your patriotic duty to try to keep this holiday season from interfering with your health, especially if you are a war worker. Moreover, at this time, when hospitals and the doctors who have not entered the armed services are already working at full capacity caring for the unavoidably ill, you should try not to increase their burden," he continued.

Rest, Diet Important

"It is even more important now than usual to remember that your body requires adequate rest, wholesome and well-balanced food and some outdoor exercise.

When you are confronted with cakes and cookies and other Christmas sweets remember the need for moderation and restraint. Enjoy the alluring holiday concoctions, but not to the exclusion of the more prosaic fruits, vegetables and milk essential to good nutrition," Dr. Riley said.

GOD REST YOU

God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay;
For Jesus Christ, our Savior,
Was born on Christmas Day.

The Christmas Spirit

"Wul, gee! ya never can tell . . . SOMEBODY might ask me what I want for Christmas!"

What Afro Readers Say

Goodwill to All Men

Dear AFRO: With the war involving the world during the season of the commemoration of twenty centuries of Him who came to the world as a "panaces for strife," the angelic anthem still proclaims "Peace on earth, goodwill to all men." Not by force for national and racial supremacy, but through the adjustment of the spirit of love and goodwill will all the world enjoy Christian democracy.

DR. CYRUS BRIDDELL
528 W. Saratoga Street

Lesson in Co-operation

Dear AFRO: I have received over a dozen complaints from tenants that their landlords refused to make necessary repairs, and in each one which I investigated I have been successful in getting the owners to co-operate and make improvements.

In cases where the landlord refused to co-operate, the city health inspectors stepped in and threatened court action unless they complied. I think these cases are an indication that we can get community co-operation to keep our city clean if we try.

REUBEN PARKER, JR.
Baltimore.

S.A. Way to Peace

Dear Afro: The spirit of Christmas is the spirit of peace. And that peace is coming.

For generations Argentina and Chile quarreled and fought over the location of a boundary. Now, on a peak of the Andes Mountains, upon the boundary line established, a colossal statue of Christ has been erected.

Upon the pedestal, this inscription (in Spanish) has been cut: "The mountains will crumble to dust ere Argentines and Chileans break the peace which, at the feet of Christ, the Redeemer, they have sworn to keep." May the Christ of the Andes, the Christ typified in that statue, soon bring peace to this troubled earth.

(Rev.) JOHN W. DAVIS
2221 Division Street
Baltimore, Md.

Behind the Scenes

Christmas Message to a World at War; Continue Fight for Christ's Principles

By MARSE S. CALLAWAY

This week we are celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Yet, we are waging a great battle today because the principles which Christ taught two thousand years ago have not been followed.

We have forgotten that God has no favorite race, that He gave His Son to the world to live among men and to teach them to live in peace with their neighbors and to treat others as they would want to be treated.

Thousands of men have not learned that lesson—to live for one another and to bear one another's burdens, as well as to deal out justice to all, so that there might be peace on earth and goodwill.

Hitlers Must Be Destroyed

We must remember that when a man rises to leadership, it is only through the blessings that God has placed upon him, and he should use it for the benefit of his fellowmen.

History is full of the good deeds of men who have given their lives that others may live. So the leaders of the world today must look facts in the face and return to the yardstick of Jesus Christ and measure men by their deeds and not their race.

All Hitlers must be destroyed and so must the spirit of Hitler, both at home and abroad. All persons who believe they belong to a superior race or that they are superior individuals must be eliminated. Then there will indeed be peace on earth, goodwill toward men.

Unfortunately there are many men in this country who have the spirit of Hitler and believe in equal treatment only for their kind. They belong to churches and they talk about Jehovah, but they do not put into practice what they read and are supposed to believe.

We must, however, have faith in our government, and in the few people who do believe in justice and fair play for all. That does not say we must not fight for our rights.

Don't Give Up Fight

We must fight. We must not get discouraged and give up, for the fight for right is always a long drawn-out battle, but it will eventually be won.

We have a lot to hope for, a great deal to be thankful for, and much to look forward to. May the New Year bring forth a victory for the Allies and for all men throughout the world who are fighting for the right things.

May we live together in the future as one people on the earth as God intended.

New Books

The following new books were recently added to branch 1 of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Fremont Avenue and Pitcher Street:

NON-FICTION

SEE HERE, PRIVATE HARGROVE—Marion Hargrove
SUEZ TO SINGAPORE — Cecil Brown
THEY WERE EXPENDABLE—William L. White
OUR HEARTS WERE YOUNG AND GAY—Cornelia Otis Skinner
LAST TRAIN FROM BERLIN—Howard K. Smith
GET THEE BEHIND ME—Hartzel Spence
STORM OVER THE LAND—Carl Sandburg
MEN AT WAR—Ernest Hemingway
SABOTAGE—Michael Sayers

FICTION

DRIVIN' WOMAN — Elizabeth Chevalier
THE ROBE—Lloyd Douglas
THE VALLEY OF DECISION—Marcia Davenport
REPRISAL—Ethel Vance
THOROFARE—Christopher Morley
THE UNINVITED—Dorothy Macardle
THE MAN MISS SUSIE LOVED—Augusta Tucker

MY GOD IS BLACK

By Lucian B. Watkins

My God is black. He made me so—
His image, breathing as I go.
He is my soul's lone Vision, through
The best of all I dare; and so
The hope I have; my faith's glad glow,
The spirit-urge I feel; each blow
That keeps me facing toward my foe:
These are His signs, unfailing, true
My God is black.

An Independent Weekly Newspaper
AFRO-AMERICAN
What the AFRO Stands for
1. United nationhood, petroversus, and democracy.
2. Colored representatives on city, county and State boards of education.
3. Equal salaries for equal work for school teachers without regard to color or sex.
4. Colored members of boards of State institutions where inmates are colored.
5. The organization of labor unions among all groups of colored workers.
6. A university and agricultural college for colored people supported by the State.
7. Closer co-operation between farmers and the State and Federal farm agents.

What the Other Fellow Says

Baltimoreans Tell All About Fellow Citizens

(EDITOR'S NOTE: What the other fellow, with whom you come in contact daily, thinks about you is often a good indication of the type of person you really are. This is the thirty-sixth in a series of interviews with persons who tell what they think of their fellow citizens.)

MRS. VIRGINIA H. BRISCOE

Despite wartime shortages, grown-ups and children alike in the neighborhood of the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Community Center, No. 122, 500 block Preston Street, were assured of a full program of holiday activities and entertainments through the efforts of Mrs. Virginia Hall Briscoe, center director.

The Taylor center, sponsored by the city recreation department, the youngest of the municipal service agencies, offers activities, including athletics, dramatics, music, craft, study groups and all phases of club work for youngsters, youths and adults.

A special effort was put forth to make this Yuletide season as merry as possible. Hundreds of children in the neighborhood were entertained at a Christmas party sponsored by the center on Wednesday at the McCulloh Homes.

The Century Civic Club of the center a group of 77 women headed by Mrs. Willa Valentine, has planned a tea to be given soon for 60 servicemen. Taking 170 gift packages, the club sang carols and presented a shower for inmates at the N. M. Carroll Home for the Aged last week.

Welfare Interest Natural

Mrs. Briscoe comes by her civic welfare interests naturally as the daughter of Mrs. L. L. Craig of Atlanta, president of the Women's Convention of the Atlanta Baptist Association and nationally prominent religious worker and public speaker. Although Mrs. Briscoe has been away from Atlanta for twenty years, she still calls it home and visits her mother often.

Wife of Joseph C. Briscoe, vocational school principal, Mrs Briscoe is secretary of the Citizens' Community War Council, block captain of the Civilian Mobilization Committee, and president of the Bon Ton Social Club.

She is also affiliated with St. Katherine Episcopal Church, the National Recreation Association, the Social Workers' Round Table, the Middle Atlantic Social Workers' Conference and the Maternal Health Clinic executive committee. Her work with these agencies has merited the following statements from her associates:

"Excellent Organizer

Clarke L. Davis, manager of the McCulloh Homes and chairman of the Citizens' Community War Council says: "Mrs. Briscoe is an excellent organizer and leader in the community. I doubt if any project is ever undertaken in this neighborhood without her backing. She works diligently and sincerely, never seeking any personal glory, but the satisfaction of seeing others happy.

Clarke Davis

"In our work together along the recreational lines, I notice that children as well as grown-ups seek her counsel and that she is always willing to help, for no matter is ever too small for her to give her time, counsel and assistance."

"Patient and Understanding"

Mrs. Willa Valentine, beautician and president of the Century Civic Club of the Taylor center, says: "In the seven years since I have been doing Mrs. Briscoe's hair, I have found her to be kind, patient and understanding, even when I'm late for her appointments. As an organizer and director of community activities, she is an inspiration to her coworkers, a grand person to work with and a wonderful asset to the community. One of her most striking characteristics is her eager willingness to help whenever she is asked for assistance."

Mrs. Valentine

"Inspires Associates"

Leonard J. Wheatley, senior supervisor in the city recreation department, says: "The planning and execution of a recreation program involves long hours of careful consideration prior to arriving at the scene where the job is to be done. This is a quality which Mrs. Briscoe possesses in abundance, plus the happy faculty of inspiring in her associates the will to do their best at all times. This is a quality devoutly to be wished."

L. J. Wheatley

A Visit from St. Nicholas

By CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

(The best known Christmas poem ever written. First published anonymously in the Troy (N.Y.) Sentinel, December 23, 1823. Written according to most authorities, in Chelsea House, Moore's old country place at what is now West 23rd Street, between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, New York City. The children may like to have this masterpiece read to them. President Roosevelt each year reads part of Dickens's Christmas Carol aloud to his family.)

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house,
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds;
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver so lively and quick,
I knew in a minute it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away, all!"
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas, too.
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.
His eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook, when he laughed, like a bowful of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"

These leading professional and business men extend to all their sincere wishes for a Very . . .

Merry Christmas

. . . and it is their wish that the New Year will bring to you a bounteous measure of good luck, good health and happiness; and to your fireside, peace and contentment.

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