MEANING OF CHRISTMAS TIME

By The Rt. Rev. C. P. Anderson, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States.

"I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!"

How many millions of people will utter these benevolent sentiments within the next few weeks! Even those who do not stop to inquire about the origin or meaning of Christmas will be caught up into this atmosphere of good will. The air will be full of it. For the time being it will be a different and a better sort of world.

Everybody will be wishing everybody else meriment, happiness and prosperity. Carols will be sung in the streets; children will be gathering around their Christmas trees to receive and give their gifts; our homes will be touched with the Christmas spirit of loving kindness. Even those homes which are clouded with poverty, which is out of keeping with Christmas, will not be entirely forgotten and efforts will be made to reach them with messages of substantial kindness and good fellowship. The hospitals will be remembered and the penal institutions will have some evidence that Christmas is unlike other seasons of the year.

The world of industry will be affected. Many firms will indulge in a benevolent generosity which goes beyond the terms of their contracts. The churches will be thronged with people, singing their "Adeste Fideies," "O Come, All Ye Faithful, Joyful and Triumphant, O Come Ye, O Come Ye to Bethlehem. Come, Let Us Adore Him, Christ the Lord!" The great Thanksgiving, the Holy Eucharist, the Christ-mass will be celebrated in the presence of myriads of adoring worshippers. Christmas is a great day; its influence reaches out to all of us.

Where did it come from? What is the origin of Christmas? There are those who say that these great and popular Christian festivals, crowned with worship and eucharists, were borrowed from pagan custom or from the mystery religion which flourished in the civilization of long ago. In this connection let it be admitted at once that the Christian Church in its march down the centuries has not hesitated to use anything that would serve its purpose.

Everything is grist that comes to its mill. It is one thing, however, to use a thing; it is another thing to say that the great Christian festivals owe their origin to the materials which the church employed for its own purposes. The Christian Church used the Greek language and Greek philosophy. It used Roman law and organization. It used the religions with which it came into contract, but it owed its origin to none of these things. The origin of Christmas-day is a person. A unique Child was born; His name was Jesus; He was born in Bethlehem; He was born of Mary; He was born in a manger.

When the Child was born the world began to be changed. Liberty, fraternity and equality began to be born. Slavery began to be abolished. War started out on its long journey towards extinction. Schools and hospitals and guilds began to come into existence. A new sacredness began to be attached to home and wife and child and mother.

These things did not all happen at once. They have not completely happened yet. The Kingdom of God is in the process of becoming, but the world cannot be indoctrinated with the person and teachings of the Christ without becoming a different and a better world; and that which was the source and origin of the best that there is in our civilization and ideals was the Child who was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King.

Why has the person of Christ had such unique influence in the world? It is because men have found God in Him and have also found in Him their highest spiritual attainments. This is not simply a church doctrine or a creed. It has been a matter of spiritual experience. Those who were associated with Him began first by liking Him, went on to love Him and ended by adoring Him. "To whom else shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." This is the testimony of experience.

The meaning of Christmas is that the greatest fact in the world is God—that He is good, not bad; that He is benevolent, not malevolent; that He is love, not hate; that He has disclosed Himself in the person of Christ; that He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son and that God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. He Who gave the gift of Christ to the world also welcomes gifts from us. The only gift that is worthy of Him is one that can be given by rich and poor alike; it is the gift of our hearts to Him. As we thankfully acknowledge God's great Gift to the world, let us in return give our hearts to Him, our money to the needy and our love to those for whom Christ lived and died.

GENTDY BROS. CIRCUS BOUGHT BY DOWNIE BROS.

Andrew Downie, owner of Downie Bros. Circus, with winter quarters in Havre de Grace, has purchased the circus of Gentry Bros., of West Baden, Indiana, and will add the entire equipment and menagerie to his circus here. Joseph Gilligan, superintendent of Downie Bros. Circus, arrived there this week with the new circus which includes new tents, seats and other paraphernalia. The sale also includes two camels, a tiger llama, bears, hyenas and other wild animals.

Mr. Downie will not use the arena for wild animal acts during the performances, the animals being used exclusively in the menagerie, which will be in the side show.

Among the many celebrated acts already signed for next year will be the Worth Family, the Morells and three dancing horses.

Mr. Downie says the 1930 circus will be bigger and better than any circus he has ever owned.

DEATH PUSHED BACK

There is a wonderful picture of American prosperity and progress in a pamphlet, "Modern Business and the Open Mind," by Julius H. Barnes, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. All its paragraphs are worth quoting, but I am especially pleased with the following:

"Twenty million American homes, electrically equipped. Twenty million American housewives paying for kilowatt hours, but buying light and warmth and coolness and cleanliness, and relief from drudgery. A shorter workday in the home; a security from drudgery. A shorter workday in the home; a security from sickness; the result of American industry bringing improvement of sanitation and hygiene which follows refrigerated foods, better containers, vacuum cleanliness. Death pushed back a little farther. Six hundred thousand less deaths per year than on the death rate of twenty years ago."

Those who are able to take advantage of the improvements in household conveniencies of which Mr. Barnes speaks, and especially electric refrigeration, are adding not only to convenience, they are adding to health. Modern civilization is pushing death a little farther back every year.

Ichabod—What makes the legislature so glum today?

Cranium They've just discovered that they've passed a law that everybody can understand.

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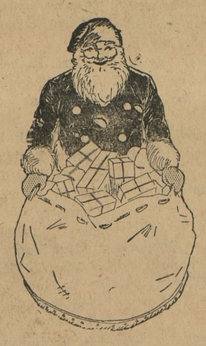

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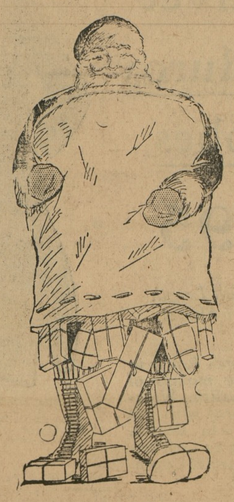

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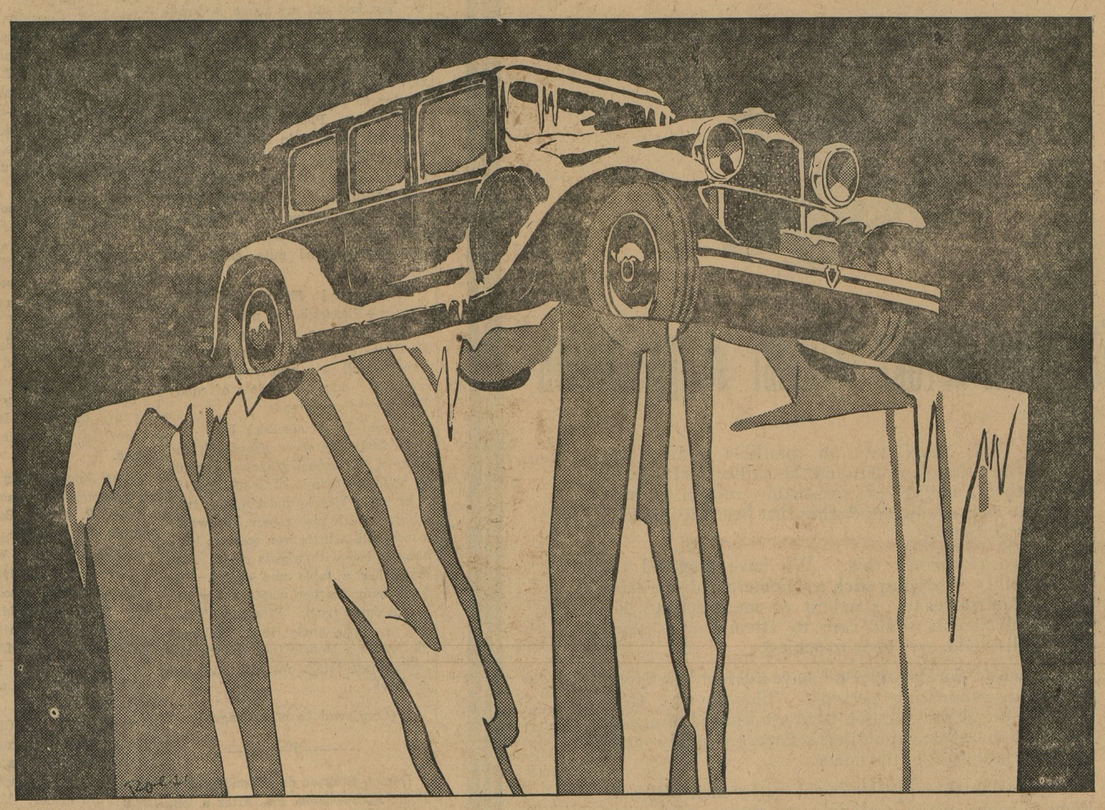

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