

# The <sup>+</sup> Seminarian

ADVENT  
1946

THE LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PHILADELPHIA

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# The <sup>+</sup> Seminarian

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**ADVENT**

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## The Student Body of The Lutheran Theological Seminary At Philadelphia

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# The Seminarian Today

"The proposal of this publication has come out of the student body. The faculty has welcomed it and given its approval. Its beginnings are very modest. It aims only to provide an outlet for that impulse of self-expression which is normal among young men who are learning to think clearly about the most important thing in life. Thus it adds another healthy activity to our student life."

This was the statement of Dr. C. M. Jacobs, a past president of the Seminary, which appeared in the first issue of THE SEMINARIAN in March 1937.

This year THE SEMINARIAN celebrates its tenth anniversary. This year THE SEMINARIAN is far in advance of the "modest beginning" of which Dr. Jacobs speaks. A new high has been attained in the caliber of the articles, in the value to the students, and in artistry. Now the Philadelphia Seminary has a student publication which is commensurable with the quality of work of which the student body is capable.

This is an outlet of student-expression for all. This is an outlet of student-expression on the important thing in life—Christianity. We insist that by keeping this before all, THE SEMINARIAN will be more than just another periodical in an age of periodicals.

## Christmas—1946

*"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."*

This is the center of the Christmas story. This is the center of the gospel message. This is the center of the church's message today. "For unto you is born . . . a Saviour" must be the keynote of this year's message of the Pastor and of the Christian in his daily life.

Too often an elaborate and complicated Christmas play grabs the center of the Festival. Too often the ideal "peace on earth" is thundered from the pulpit with high sounding phrases which leave the individual up in the air. Too often the church succumbs to commercialized-secularism in its Christmas celebration and the Christ of Christmas is lost amidst decorations, special services, and the questionable spirit of giving.

First man must be brought to the realization that a Saviour has come to him. When he puts his whole trust in this Saviour, then will all things be added unto him more abundantly. Let us proclaim from the pulpit that the saving grace has come from God and when men

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# Students:

The pulse is normal!!

But because the pulse is normal, there is no reason to assume that everything is as it should be and then to sit back and not expend any effort in the many student programs.

It is the pulse of the campus life of the student body outside of the class room to which I refer. There has been and still is a steady output by the various student-body committees, which is exerted to meet the needs of the campus life. However, we as individuals take so much for granted in the work of these committees that we often impair their work by sheer negligence. We either fail to heed the call for assistance or we fail to participate fully and wholeheartedly in the activities by them.

Much has been done by the Father Heyer Commission, the Lutheran Student Association, the Inter-seminary Committee, the Board of Publications, and the Athletic and Social Committees. Much they have done is to be commended. Much more is expected and should be expected from all of these groups as the year progresses. However, unless we have the every-student support in each and every one of these little can be expected of any program which the Committees plan.

The past few months has seen several important meetings of the Inter-seminary Movement, in which many of our students are interested. This is, I think, one of the most important developments in our time. The ecumenical trend in the church forces us to consider the place of Christian unity in the world. It is up to us while we are on the campus to become clear in our aims in this important field. While a mass movement toward the catholicity of the church may not come tomorrow, the vision of a Christian world-wide community must be held ever before us. The Seminaries of the Philadelphia area will meet on our campus in February and this will give all of us an opportunity to find out first hand what the movement is doing and what our conviction may be in this important work.

Thus every seminarian is an integral part of the student body and directly responsible for the success or failure of its activities. It is up to each of us to see that the pulse remains normal and that no part of our campus life becomes abnormal.

ALTON HOFFMAN

# “Quem Quaeritis, Pastores?”

“Whom do ye seek, O Shepherds?”

As the blessed Christmastide approached with its simple message of a Child born in a stable, the reply to this question, a traditional line from the ancient Nativity plays, must be stated clearly and definitely. It is a truism to say that the materialism of our day has all but effaced the core of Christmas in the celebrations of most people. But since it has reached the alarming point of becoming a truism, the Church must fight it with all her power.

## *Dignity of Service Must Be Maintained*

This insidious fault has wormed its way even into the Church's celebration of the great festival. All of us have seen with dismay the attempts of our parishes to produce Nativity plays by modern authors which are far beyond both the talents of the participants and the accommodations of the setting. All the lights are extinguished as a thundering herd runs up the nave with furniture and props for the next scene; “angels” equipped with “sparklers” carefully stored away since last July successfully ignite Christmas greens; and Wise Men bow low and suddenly toward the East as they trip over their portieres.

This year the Seminary is producing a Christmas play as part of the traditional Christmas Ves-

pers in the Chapel. The entire office will be sung according to the “Choral Service” of Dr. Luther D. Reed, President-Emeritus of the Seminary. In an attempt to get away from the materialism which has been increasingly associated with plays of the Nativity, we have selected the play of the ancient cathedral of Rouen. The manuscript dates from the 14th Century but the play itself is probably considerably older and is based on a Christmas Introit Trope. This will be preceded by a procession of prophets from the English Chester Cycle, the manuscript of which is dated also about the 14th Century. This serves to introduce the Rouen play by presenting to the congregation a series of Old Testament prophets who foretell the birth of Christ.

## *Simplicity Governs Entire Production*

These plays are so simple in characterization, setting, costumes and dialog that they allow the full glory of the theme to shine through. A creche is the only prop, the chancel the only stage and ecclesiastical vestments the only costumes needed. The whole spirit of the drama blends perfectly with the magnificent simplicity of our liturgy. These Miracle Plays constitute another source for the Lutheran Church to tap in the vast untouched heritage which is hers.

The Church can take arms suc-  
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# Advent-A Meditation

Another year of grace opens to the Christian world.

It is Advent, the season of prayer and preparation when we await the coming of the Expected One. It symbolizes for us the days when God's chosen people waited for their Messiah. Languishing in darkness, oppressed by foes, burdened with the grief of their sin, they longed intensely for their salvation.

Nowhere is this story more poignantly expressed than in the ancient song of Advent, "Rorate Coeli," which is based on the writings of Isaias, the great pre-evangelist of Christ who expressed the faith, the sorrows and hopes of the Chosen People during the centuries they waited for the Anointed One.

. . .

As we prepare our hearts again for our Lord's coming on Christmas, the "Rorate Coeli" brings to life the voice of Israel crying, "Behold, O Lord, the affliction of Thy people. Send quickly Him who is to come. Send forth the Lamb who rules all earthly kingdoms from Petra in the desert to the Mount of the daughter of Zion, that He may take away the grievous yoke of our subjection."

Back to Israel comes the assuring voice of God saying, "Be ye comforted, be ye comforted, O ye My people: for most speedily comes salvation. Why are ye consumed with sorrowing, so that your grief has quite transformed you? I come to save, be no more fearful. For know ye not that I am your God and Master, Israel's Holy One, your sole Redeemer."

Like as the Jews of old prayed and prepared themselves for the Advent in the flesh, so should we

anticipate the Advent in glory, when Christ shall appear finally on the clouds of heaven as judge and king on the last day. But though we walk in darkness and have need to think upon the day of judgment, the holy season of Advent must turn our thoughts to the day of the Saviour's birth, the Incarnation of God and the beginning of our salvation.

Thus it will be as long as God in His wisdom withholds the second coming of the Lord.

For each year at this time the Church, awakened from her sleep, goes forth to meet her Divine Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, while she sings: "The Bridegroom comes, awake! . . . Your lamps with gladness take; Hallelujah!"

. . .

While the Church keeps her vigil in the dark night we sing "O come, O come, Emmanuel!"

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# Poetry and the Pastor

*"Poetry is the breath and  
finer spirit of all knowledge"*

—WORDSWORTH

The fact that popular taste in poetry is depraved is no excuse for indiscriminate selection or careless rendition on the part of the Pastor. Often during his work in the ministry, he finds it helpful to use a poem or bit of verse to drive home a particular thought or idea. It may be a stanza of a hymn, but frequently it is gleaned from the profuse store of religious verse outside of the hymnal. The verse *MAY* be good. More often it is bad both in form and content, and certainly cannot speak well for the refined taste that one has a right to expect from the pulpit. The Pastor's task is to educate wherever and whenever the opportunity is presented. Therefore, a standard must be set and adhered to when there is doubt as to the appropriateness or quality of any given verse.

*Does the poet  
Have vision and creation?*

In approaching the matter it is well that we rehearse a truism or two, and at the same time go back of poetry itself to discuss briefly those things that make a poet, and which precipitate the final result of his efforts.

At the start, one must realize that not all who write verse are poets, nor that all verse is poetry. The Greek word for poet, *Poietes*,

means "the maker" or "the creator," while the Latin word is *Vates* meaning "seer" or "prophet."

Here we have the two-fold function of the poet wherein both *vision* and *creation* are the essentials. He creates, and the material out of which he creates is his seer's vision. This may be called a peculiar kind of ecstasy, which we recognize as something mystical and other-worldly. Before it we can only stand in wonder and marvel at the evidence of God's presence. Vision is the thing that marks the true artist over against the homely pretender. The uninitiated may call it inspiration, but to the poet himself it is something more acute more soul-gripping.

When this moment of vision has passed, the poet must prepare to express his experience. A symbol must be found, one that will make the experience concrete for others. But a conscious striving after a symbol may be fatal. The selection may be trite, and as a result the experience will seem commonplace or mawkish. This happens inevitably to the pseudo-poet who, with little excuse, decides that now he will write a poem. Unfortunately, this is in back of much so-called religious verse. Expression is hackneyed and the experience or vision non-existent. Strained sentimentality or archaic phraseology galloons each line, fairly dripping honey and treacle.

*The pulpit is no place  
For rollicking meter*

Let us be reminded, however, that when we speak of symbols we do not confine the term to words; meter, too, of one kind or another, is most important. It may heighten the experience or completely nullify it. One scarcely could be moved by a poem, however solemn the words, that rollicked in the fashion of a limrick:

*"There once was a Babe  
come from God  
Whose Mother was Mary,  
most mild."*

Not only would this be ridiculous, but blasphemous as well. The meter is bawdy. Perhaps it is an extreme example, but 'poems' equally offensive are weeped or gushed from the pulpit every Lord's Day.

It is impossible to go into all the niceties of poetry here, for that would be a life endeavor in itself. In amateur evaluation, however, it can be agreed that each of us should formulate a definition for guidance. A definition of rather abstract terms is always difficult, and hardly ever entirely successful. Hence, we cannot presume where experts have failed in degree. But in considering definitions, we at least are confronted with some truth, though incomplete.

Elizabeth Nitchie states that "Poetry is the sublimation of all that pertains to the human mind

and spirit, the raising of imagination, reason, and the sense of fact, of emotion, thought, and words, to the highest power." This makes no mention of rhyme or meter, which need not be present, but is dependent, of course, upon whether or not they heighten the experience for the reader or hearer.

How, then, are we to evaluate religious verse?

1. Let us read for general impression. First impressions are important.

2. Do the rhyme and meter offend; or do they bolster the meaning? Is the meaning clear, or obscured by exaggerated symbolism?

3. Are words and phrases selected with care, or are they trite and dull?

4. Does the author convey a real experience that you can share vicariously, or does the experience seem affected and insincere?

5. From the prospective user's view, is the poem in all respects suitable to the occasion for which it is to be used?

The last point is one which many Pastors fail to consider. Congregations are subjected to pretty babblings that are entirely irrelevant to the occasion. Such incoherency is inexcusable even if it is only noticed by the few.

*Reading makes  
Or breaks the poem*

Then in addition, the Pastor too often does not know how to read. The end of a line seems to indicate to him the end of a thought. He drops his voice, pauses, and

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# The Church and the World's Need

*The title of this article was the theme of the twenty-fourth annual conference of the Interseminary Movement of the Middle Atlantic Region, which was held at the Elm Park Methodist Church, Scranton, Pennsylvania, on November 7, 8 and 9. In attendance were 91 delegates from 24 seminaries in the Middle Atlantic Region. Mount Airy was represented by Eric Sigmar, Earl Knaus, Celo Leitzel and John Vannorsdall, who is the field representative in this region. This is a report and summary prepared by our representatives.*

The principle address of the opening session was delivered by Dr. Theodore Wedel, canon of Washington Cathedral and warden of Cathedral College of Preachers. Dr. Wedel spoke on "The Nature of the Church" and said that the concept of "The Church" is being rediscovered in our day. We know what the churches are, he said, but we do not know what "The Church" is?

Dr. Wedel's first consideration was why the concept of "The Church" has been lost. His opinion was that the age of rational Biblical criticism, which analyzed the Bible as no other book has ever been analyzed, left only the historical Christ. This period of analytical criticism left the synoptics as the primary presentation of the Christ. The result was a Confucian-Jesus religion. Jesus was known only as a model, a good example, and a great teacher. This "pre-resurrection" type of Christianity made of the Gospel a mere challenge to which no man

could aspire. Sinners, he said, need more than a model Christ to imitate; they need a Saviour.

The speaker's next consideration was the doctrine of "The Church" as found in the New Testament. Dr. Wedel maintained that the Gospels (as an account of the life and ethical teachings of Jesus) were not the basis of the faith of the early Christians, that their faith was found in the Cross, the Resurrection and the Ascension. They did not teach the Sermon on the Mount and preach about its ethical implications, but they did bear witness to the facts of the way of salvation which was made known to them through Christ. The Ascension meant to the Christians that, although Christ had risen to His Heavenly Father, His Church remained on earth. This Church was the fellowship of the society of the penitent, the forgiven and the forgiving. Through the Spirit, Christ continued to make contacts with those who were members of His

Body—"The Church." As time went on, a sacrament of admission to this Body (Baptism) and one of nurture (Holy Communion) came into use by the Church.

*Dr. Thomas Lists  
Four Important Needs*

The second address was delivered by Dr. John W. Thomas, of the Crozer Theological Seminary, who spoke on the theme, "The Church and the World's Needs." He listed them as follows:

1. The need for relief of physical distress.
2. The need for a Christ-centered world unity.
3. The need for the Church in Soviet-American relations.
4. The need for personal security realized only in God.

Five seminars were held on the general theme of the world's need and how the Church can meet that need.

One, led by Dr. T. Taylor, Professor of New Testament at the Pittsburgh Xenia United Presbyterian Seminary, discussed the need for a unified society. The group reached these four conclusions:

1. *Racial differences*—Tolerance is not enough. We must reach understanding through the practice of Christian love; we must provide opportunities for inter-racial fellowship; discrimina-

tion is incompatible with Christian principles; as Christian citizens we are responsible for the amelioration of prejudice through governmental action.

2. *Economic differences*—We must practice Christian stewardship, especially if we are blessed with wealth; every legitimate occupation is worthy and honorable; we must witness against economic oppression.

3. *Educational differences*—We must provide equality of opportunity for all and discourage prejudice against the uneducated.

4. *Ideological differences*—We must bear witness to the intrinsic worth of all men under God. In summary and conclusion, the group felt that we must (1) recognize our own sin and repent, (2) "clean up" the Church, (3) unite for action in the community.

*The Pastor is  
To Set the Stage*

Another group, led by the Rev. John White, pastor of the Simpson Methodist Church, Scranton, Pa., felt that there are three elements in a personal conviction: (1) It necessarily arises out of a crisis. (2) It is an emotional experience on a practical level. (3) Its bases are humility and prayer, sharing it with others, Christian service, the Scriptures.

It was agreed that all we can do is clear the ground for repentance and for the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the lives of men. The minister must be the leader in this and must

have a basic personal conviction of his own. Sermons should grow out of the experience of our people. Public worship must be carefully planned for both the believers and the non-believers. We need to educate our people in liturgical usage. The Lord's Supper needs more emphasis.

A third seminar discussed the need for Christian workers. Led by Dr. John Oliver Nelson, director of the Commission on the Ministry of the Federal Council of Churches, they considered the numerical needs and found that all denominations have more vacancies than men and women to fill them.

Another group, led by Dr. Thomas, discussed Christian missions. First, they sought to define the missionary enterprise. The missionary enterprise is the Church, they decided. With this in mind, they felt that: (1) we should seek to lead individuals into a saving knowledge of Christ; (2) we should nurture individuals in the faith; (3) we should bring individuals into the corporate body of Christ; (4) we should be aware, as a Church, of our two-fold relationship to the world—to be a leavening influence in society and to stimulate the missionary idea. Second, the needs of missions were listed as: (1) Freedom and individuality. (2) A continuing experience of Christ. (3) A spontaneous and indigenous religious community. (4) Emphasis on the supreme worth of the individual. (5) Avoidance of professional ministerialism. (6) Stim-

ulation of enthusiasm in the congregation.

### *Christian Education A Bulwark in the Parish*

The fifth seminar, under Dr. Frank W. Herriot, associate professor of Religious Education and Psychology at Union Theological Seminary, New York, decided that the following things are involved in Christian education: Preparation for conversion, practical theology, developing potentialities, education in doctrine, preparation for living in the Christian body, and Christ-likeness, which includes confidence in God and care for men. The group next considered how these things could be carried out more effectively in the parish. Some methods discussed were: (1) by example—our attitudes in the home, etc., (2) by expanding the scope of Christian education—more hours of religious education, etc., (3) by sharing our experiences; (4) by relating religious education to all of life's experiences.

On the second day, Dr. Nelson spoke on the "Personality of the Minister." He developed the thesis: "It is easier to be a poor minister today and harder to be a good minister of Christ than ever before." He said it is easier to be a poor minister because: (1) The academic work, especially in the college, is easier today. (2) Funds available for study make it easier to prepare for the ministry than for any other profession. (3) The lack of formal office hours is a

great temptation for the pastor to loaf.

"Why is it harder to be a good minister today than before?" (1) Psychological and social pressures cause many ministers to try to be "like everybody else," resulting in commonplace secularism. (2) The disunity of the church makes it harder to be a good minister. Our lay people are becoming increasingly conscious that we are a disunited group, and many are beginning to lament that situation. In speaking of disunity, Dr. Nelson presented in some detail two ways by which the Church of Christ can speak as one church: Through organic union, or federation, and by clarifying our principles of authority.

Dr. Nelson concluded with this: The ministry is an overwhelming task; anyone who has the temerity to enter it must do so with the conviction that God has sent him.

### *Ecumenical Movement A Theological Problem*

The final speaker was Dr. Otto Piper, professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary. His subject was "Theological Trends in the Ecumenical Church."

Dr. Piper said that the basic question of the ecumenical movement is the Church's place in the world, and is a theological problem. The early ecumenical missionary conferences agreed on that.

Dr. Piper stated that a change

in theological trends has taken place, and that today we have the following new emphases in theology:

1. *Luther Renaissance*: This movement originated primarily in Lutheran circles, especially in Sweden. It is a new interest in Luther, in the Reformer himself and his own distinctive theology. It is an attempt to study the experience and early writings of Luther as opposed to the traditional study of 17th century Lutheran theologians. This study has revolutionized our whole understanding of Luther. It has illuminated Luther's conception of the grace of the hidden God, over against the conception of a sentimental loving Father. This means a complete rejection of the possibility for the human mind to have a direct knowledge of God.

2. *Dialectical Theology of Barth and Brunner and others*: They emphasize the contrast of the sovereignty of God and the finitude of man, as opposed to the 19th century anthropomorphic-theology which regarded man as innately good.

3. *New Biblicalism*: This movement is the child of the extensive study of the New Testament from 1850 to the present. It has ushered in a deeper understanding of the language of the New Testament. It points out that God is with us by speaking to us. It contrasts the conception of the "Word of God," and the "words of the Bible."

4. *Sacramental Realism*: This

is a theological movement of a school of the Greek Orthodox Church in Paris. It stresses the idea of a present God in a world which is not divine. This is in protest of the 19th century optimism which regarded the world as good.

These four theological emphases did not lead to a uniform ecumenical theology, but they have a number of features in common: (1) They are all theocentric. (2) They are all theologies of faith. (3) In all, theology and the Church are closely related. (4) There is a combination of teaching and preaching in all of them. (5) Each emphasis stands for

supernatural realism as opposed to the 19th century idea that the only reality is in the world of here and now.

Dr. Piper made a few comments on American Theology, and said that its greatest weakness is that it is always apologetic and defensive. It seeks to point out to the rationalist and pragmatist that Christianity "isn't bad." He also said that many of our churches have too many "programs" not undergirded by a basic message.

Dr. Piper concluded that we need a complete re-thinking of our theology, and that Biblical theology must form the basis or norm of all other theology.

### **Advent—A Meditation**

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... and we feel Him drawing ever closer. Our hearts leap for joy within us, for the prophecy shall be fulfilled that "the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." The night of sadness becomes the morn of song, for the Lord is nigh! We lift our voices with Mary in a Magnificat of joy, for the day is close at hand. With restrained rejoicing the Church heralds Him with sweetest names—O Wonderful . . . Counsellor . . . The mighty God . . . The Prince of Peace.

The Advent-tide has brought us to the eve of our Lord's Nativity. It is the Advent that has brought Him closer to us day by day and quickened our desire for His coming into the hearts of men everywhere. It is the Advent that makes the children sing, "O Infant Jesus, come to me . . . And make my heart a crib for Thee!" It is the Advent that brings us at last in the early hours of the dawn to the hillside in Judaea where we hear again with the shepherds the ecstatic song of the angels, "Gloria in Excelsis Deo"—and we know that the Lord is come.

**J. ROBERT MAYER**

## Poetry and the Pastor

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then lopes on, stressing meter and rhyme over meaning. This marks the amateur, and is more the sort of thing expected of children in the nursery school reciting Mother Goose. Poetry is meant to be read aloud. But too many exquisite compositions are ruined by careless and indifferent rendition.

If a poem is worthy of use, it demands and deserves sympathetic treatment.

Good religious verse can be a helpful ally in the gospel ministry. We should cultivate our taste and use whatever we then prefer wisely and well.

## Christmas—1946

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know this then will be added peace, and love, and friendship. This Saviour makes every man count. They count in the eyes of God and then too in the eyes of their fellow Christians. This it is that mankind throughout the world needs today.

# Christmas Caroling

Christmas caroling dates back to the early days of England when the wai: from the streets made the rounds of the village and sang unaccompanied. As they sang for the pleasure of the people in the village they expected rewards. Then, as a result of this, carols of various types sprang up rapidly throughout the land. They were differentiated from other songs for these were songs of joy and exaltation accompanied either by a stately dance or a sprightly tune. In time this custom was carried over into Christianity and less formal hymns were sung by groups as they wandered about the streets of the villages. Judging from the number of sacred carols that have come down to us, this custom spread throughout the continent and was received by all. It became associated mainly with the Christmas Festival. The custom was revived here in America a little over a hundred years ago after having been suppressed by the Puritan regime of the early days. The custom has in recent years spread widely throughout America and has grown into a practice of greeting the dawn of Christmas with songs of joy and exaltation as the angels did on that first Christmas morn in Judea.

# Christmas Also Comes to India

Among the Christian people in South India, as with Christian people in other parts of the world, Christmas is a time of general happiness and good cheer.

One way the Indian people celebrate almost any occasion is to appear in brand-new clothes. Even in remote village congregations the people don them for Christmas. In this case "brand-new" is a literal description because the manufacturer's trade mark—the "brand"—is prominently displayed on the garments. These marks usually disappear with the first washing and it is a matter of pride to wear a garment which has not been sent to the laundryman and thus is brand-new.

The manner of celebration depends upon the size and location of the village. Typically, one simple building serves as church and school. The smallest and poorest congregation scrapes together enough money to send a delegation to the nearest bazaar town to buy the gaily colored paper which is indispensable for decoration on festive occasions.

## *There Is No Holly On Plains of India*

Sometimes a crude proscenium arch of sticks is constructed and covered with the paper in various colors and intricate designs. This labor of love in many cases brings artistic and pleasing results—even to Western eyes which associate Christmas festivity with holly,

mistletoe and evergreen, decorations not obtainable on the plains of South India.

In every congregation with a parochial school, and in many with no school, a Christmas program is arranged in which as many children as possible take part. Christmas songs and drills follow the pattern of our Western celebrations but there are many features typical of the Christian Church in South India.

Indian children are uninhibited and natural dramatists. It is never difficult to persuade them to take part in a program or necessary to urge them to "speak up" so they can be heard.

One of the most important parts of the Christmas celebration is the Dialog—and there will be several in every program. (When Indian people have any kind of entertainment they are quite willing to make a night of it and programs have a tendency to go on and on and on and on.)

In a typical Dialog, two girls rise and face each other at right angles to the audience. They stand just far enough apart to keep out of each other's way while making their stiff gestures.

Then they begin to shout!

The slam-bang conversation begins with questions about why all the people are dressed in new clothes and have their houses freshly whitewashed and why all the special decorations have been strung up. By a series of ques-

tions and answers the meaning of the whole Christmas story is brought out for the benefit of both the Christians and the non-Christians who may be present.

*Hindus, Mohammedans*

*Also Listen*

Sometimes the program is held in a specially-constructed *pandal*, a temporary shelter of leaves. During the Centenary celebrations in Guntur and Rajahmundry there were *pandals* capable of seating several thousand people. Although caste Hindus and Mohammedans might hesitate to enter the church, they are quite willing to stand just outside the shelter, close enough to see, hear and enjoy the performance.

In some parts of the Andhra Church it once was the custom for the missionary to visit as many village Christmas festivals as possible. Because of this, various congregations held celebrations at any time from the first of December to late in February. The present tendency is away from this custom for two reasons: It burns up a lot of time, energy and transportation funds for an occasion at which the missionary renders no real service to the congregation, and it puts too much emphasis on the importance of the missionary in suggesting that his presence is necessary for an adequate Christmas celebration. The Indian pastors endeavor to attend as many as possible, but a pastor with 20 congregations can cover only a few during the immediate Christmas season.

At a mission station where there

is a boarding school the program is more elaborate than it is in the villages. This is especially true when girls and women take part, when the *kollatam* or *kumi* is the *piece de resistance*. This is a group dance in which the girls carry pairs of short sticks. As they weave in and out in complicated routines they strike their own and one another's sticks in cadence with the music. The pace quickens as the dance proceeds; the movement grows faster and faster and the sticks strike harder and harder.

*There Is No TAMASHA*

*In This Celebration*

The fact that the Indian people are natural dramatists and mimics sometimes makes it difficult to rule out features that are offensive to good taste in religious programs. Because of that, I have endeavored to confine the *tamasha*—or fun-making—element to the informal party following the Christian meal and give it no place in the formal religious ceremony.

The dramatization of the Christmas story is a necessary part of the shepherds. In my childhood, "the shepherds" meant the bearded, scholarly wearers-of-the-long-ropes seen usually in canvases painted by the great artists. We did not think of "the shepherds" in terms of the overalled farmer who came to town with mud on his boots, anxious to sell his mutton at the Saturday night market.

To Indian school children "shepherds" have nothing to do with medieval Italian art; they are fa-



miliar characters around the village. When the Bible says the shepherds were "sore afraid," the school boys know how to dramatize it. The result is that in our plays the shepherds appear as so many Mortimer Snerds in oversized turbans and the sheep are real (or impersonated by the smaller fry, gambolling about on hands and knees).

The audience sits back, ready for a good laugh—and gets it. When the angel appears (usually standing on a chair, wearing a sheet and clutching a flashlight), there can be no doubt that the shepherds are "sore afraid."

The youngsters need no rehearsal. They play it to the last ounce of comedy, and they love

it! The angel scene is the high spot of comic relief for the audience but it never detracts from the beauty and significance of the Christmas story.

The school program is usually attended by a group of non-Christians of more or less official status. It might include the village officer, the headmasters of the Hindu and Mohammedan schools and many of the people who are referred to in England as "the gentry."

They come to be entertained and they never leave without hearing a straightforward Gospel message, in a festival which is centered in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

ROBERT S. OBERLY

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"Quem Quaeritis, Pastores?" (Continued from page 5)

cessfully against materialism only by attacking it on every front, however minor it may seem. Let us resign ourselves to the fact that, where Nativity Plays are

concerned, we neither can nor wish to compete with Radio City Music Hall.

Let us make certain of the right answer to our "Quem Quaeritis?"

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## Living Christianity

This experience was related by a missionary in a talk recently. He was teaching and preaching about the Bible to a group in his mission field. As he came to a climactic point in his talk he noticed that one of the group, who had been listening quite intently to all that he had been saying, got up and deliberately walked out. After a few minutes the same person returned and sat down quietly and continued to listen more intently than before. After he had finished the service that day, the missionary went up to this person and asked why he had left? The reply was that the person had been so interested in what he had been saying that he had to go outside and ask the missionary's guide if the man really lived all these things about which he was talking. When the guide had said that the missionary did, the man returned to listen again for now it meant more to him. It was really life.

## Contributers to this Issue

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