

# Church

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## THE DAWN OF TOMORROW

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— from —

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## Why Have Decorated Christmas Trees?

By Barbara Jaquith

Where did our Christmas Tree come from? The first enchanted glimpse of the sparkling evergreen tree, hung with delicate ornaments of every shape and colour, twinkling with fairy lights and charming us with the sweet fragrance of Christmas—this delightful vision convinces us every year that Christmas trees must surely have come from heaven.

Bringing evergreens into our homes in December is a very old custom indeed. It goes back even beyond "once upon a time." So far back that people have forgotten who first started the custom. Evergreen branches and plants remind us that in spite of ice and gray skies and the cold of winter that the days will grow long again, that spring will come again, that trees will be green again, that birds will sing again. So what could be more delightful than to decorate an evergreen tree with glass balls of many colours to remind us of fruit, with stars and animals and well-beloved things? Tiny electric lights make us think of snow sparkling in the moonlight, of icicles that flash tiny rainbows in the sunlight. In grandmother's day wax candles were used but they had to be watched so very carefully to prevent dreadful fires.

The decorated Christmas tree came to Canada and the United States from Germany and Central Europe. Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, charmed the English Court in 1841 with a Christmas Tree and the idea spread rapidly throughout England and America.

But the custom of having a Christmas tree or "Christ-

baum" as it is called in Germany, goes back to the old miracle plays about Bible Stories that used to be acted in front of the churches in the Middle Ages.

One play about Adam and Eve was very popular at Christmas time. To indicate the Garden of Eden there was always a fir tree hung with apples and this was called the "Paradeisbaum" or Tree of Paradise. The play ended with the story of Bethlehem and the coming of Christ to save men from sin which had caused Adam and Eve to be driven from the Garden of Eden.

The custom developed of having Paradise trees in the homes and of decorating them not only with apples but cak-

es and cookies in the shape of stars, angels, shepherds, sheep, wise men and camels. Other animals and flowers were added as time went on. Finally the Christmas candles were placed on the tree representing Christ as the Light of the World.

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and a

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