

Dawn of Tomorrow

Published in the interests of and for the Advancement of the colored people of Canada.

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Subscription Rates

One year	\$2.00
Six months	1.25
Three months	.75
Single Copy	.05

Entered in the post office at London Ont., as second class matter.

The Dawn of Tomorrow Publishing Co.
London, Ont.

Christmas

The true happiness of Christmas is bound up with the children, and it all centres around the birth of the Holy Child, "very God of very God, Who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and was in-

carnate, by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." It follows, therefore, that the principal feature of our celebration of this happy day should be the offering of our homage to Him Whose birthday it is. Any neglect of this surely deprives Christmas Day of all real meaning.

Regarding the coming of a new year, may I point out that this is a most appropriate time for an audit of our personal affairs in a spiritual sense? The only valid hope for a brighter and better future for the world lies in a more general acceptance of God's rule and guidance by the nations of the world. We can each do our part towards bringing this about, by a firm personal resolve to profit by the experience of past mistakes, slackness and misdoings, and to be more sincere and active in living the Christian life during the days which God may yet grant to us upon earth.

These two thoughts I offer to you as the only sure ways of bringing to fulfilment the wish for a happy Christmas and a bright New Year.

The Light Still Shineth in Darkness

The Christmas story which is a song of joy out of the heart of the world comes to us each year just as fresh and new as when we first listened to it with the starry-eyed wonder of little children. It never grows old. It never loses its appeal. Where in all the world is there any story like that coming to us as it does on the wings of music, with angel faces in the background, all wrapped in the glamour and haze of ineffable beauty. Something deep within us recognizes that here is truth so profound that we can hope to understand it only as we lay aside our towering pride and look out again through the wondering, appreciative eyes of childhood. That is why the old familiar hymns and carols are so dear to us—they are a permanent part of the world's spiritual treasure. They defy the barriers of race and nationality. "Holy Night," whether it be sung in English or Chinese, still gives expression to the reverence we feel as we stand in the presence of Divine mystery with the light of another world shining in our faces.

Vast changes have come over this world since that humble birth in Bethlehem. But the voice of Christ still speaks with timeless and universal appeal. We sense the reality of His prophecy, "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away." The Gospel which means literally "Good News" is still the most urgent and important news the world has ever heard. For at the heart of it is the assurance that this is God's world. A thousand ugly facts may seem to deny it—the throb of pain in our own experience often makes us wonder if there be any God. But Christmas comes and reveals to us divine possibilities both for ourselves and for this weary world. If suspicion and fear and intolerance seem to dominate the world situation, there is no occasion to despair when we remember that with God "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday." When we get panicky at the trend of events it is comforting to stop and take a long look at things. Time is always fighting on behalf of what is true and beautiful and good. There are temporary setbacks—like the trough of the ocean waves, but the current sweeps on. This does not suggest that progress is automatic—that we can stand still as if we were on an escalator, and let time carry us up to the next floor. On the contrary, there can be no progress without determined, persistent effort. God uses this poor humanity of ours to get His work done. This is not a fool proof world. The price of our freedom is that we can misuse it. We can blow ourselves to bits if we are silly enough to think that war can settle our problems. No, progress is not automatic. Nevertheless this is God's world. The Christian religion stakes its life on that. And because it is God's world, even in our darkest hours we can dare to believe that the final chapter will record a victory for truth and right. Little men drunk with power can strut up and down the earth, rattling swords and threatening all who stand in their way, but in the long run, good will is more powerful than hatred and right will outlast wrong.

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