

CRITIQUE

HILDA GRACE MEELKER

HOLIDAY REFLECTIONS

The question must always come at last,
What have you left when Christmas is past?
When the glitter of tinsel and wreath are gone,
What have you left when the day moves on?

Christian young people, what have we left?

Once again another Christmas season has past by into eternity. The most festive and celebrated event of the year has ended amid the helter-skelter of a busy, mad rushing world. The glitter and tinsel decorations have been removed. The well-known Christmas carols are no longer heard. The cards which were sent with their "Merry Christmas" and "Happy New Year" greetings for the season have been discarded. The loud sound of the cash register's ring in the store of the town's main street has quieted. American people have already spent their yearly six billion dollars for the Christmas season. The dining and feasting are over and the churches have finished with the yearly Christmas program.

Yes, when Christmas arrives, our country outdoes itself in celebration. Many people also outdo themselves to make Christmas a festive season. Many make Christmas a season for well-wishing and for complete enjoyment. When Christmas comes everyone wears a happy holiday smile. Man speaks of "Peace on Earth" and even of putting "Christ back into Christmas".

But, alas, when Christmas is past, man still lives in the same hopeless world. He still has the same problems to face. The world problems are the same. The radio, which only days ago played the Christmas carols and proclaimed peace to all mankind, just now is telling about wars and rumors of wars all over the world, of murder and theft and of failures of the U.N. Bills are collected from those who were yesterday hypocritically wished a "Merry Christmas". It's the same old world. Those magnificent lights and decorations, those beautiful cards of greeting, yesterday's carol singing and yesterday's discourse about peace on earth is over. It all hasn't brought much change. The world bought presents for far more than they could afford. The host of lovely cards has changed to a mass of unpaid bills. Man ate more than was proper yesterday and many people have little left than a hangover when Christmas is past.

It was a phantom—the whole Christmas spirit was a beautiful colored blown-up bubble and now that bubble has burst. Nothing is left of the bubble but the air which was inside and that too has blown away.

It seems now a more appropriate question to ask not, "What the world has left when Christmas is past", but, "What the world does not have when Christmas is past". Although the world may change the joy of Christmas, by their celebrations, it often possesses a superficial religion, which subtly hides God's gift to His people, by proclaiming Christ as a gift for all mankind only to be accepted. Or man speaks of the little baby Jesus who came to earth to become the best man that ever lived and we must only follow his teaching and world will become unselfish and loving.

Oh, how hopeless and vain and wicked is the modern Christmas celebration.

Christmas is past and what have we left Christian young people? Was our Christmas a bubble which burst at the seasons end? Have we outdone ourselves to buy glitter and tinsel? Have we overemphasized the presents and given our often hypocritical reaction of acting pleased

with a gift when really we didn't care for it at all? Was all our emphasis upon celebrating, on decorations, dining and feasting?

Then it is doubtful whether we Christian young people have much left when Christmas is past. Except that we too will have the same world, the same problems to face and no peace upon earth.

In this world of imagination, hypocrisy and hilarity which completely surrounds God's people, it is sometimes difficult to keep our balance. How did you and your family fare at Christmas? Now that Christmas is past, did Christmas mean anything? Did it leave you something real, something that has been of benefit, something that strengthened you and yours in the faith? Did it leave you with that outlook of faith and hope in this present world?

The Christian's answer to the question, "What do I have left at Christmas?" is only, "That what I did to God's honor and glory". If we look back over the past season to see what we did to God's honor and glory we must needs admit that we have failed miserably. Of ourselves we have nothing left after Christmas and hopelessness and despair overcome us.

But God sent the Holy Spirit and He so works in our hearts, that we have everything left when Christmas is past. We have a strengthened faith, new courage and increased hope.

We as Christians have seen another Christmas ebb away into eternity. What is left for us to be joyful in? Unto us a Savior is born!! That is what we have left after Christmas. Christmas is past and the Christian again visited Bethlehem and saw the babe in swaddling clothes. We saw our own misery in the wicked celebrations of the world and understand that we are rich in our rejoicing in Christ. We have our hope left. We know that Christ was crucified. We know He is in glory. He is coming back. Then when temptations come and we hear of unrest and sadness in the world we do not become discouraged but rest in the fact that God sends all these things for the building of His church and for the honor of His name.

Christ was not sent merely for the assurance of our faith but for the glory of the Father who sent Him. Therefore, our hope after Christmas lies ahead to the time when God's name will be fully realized in glory.

Yes, we as Christian young people do have something left. Christmas is past and we are one year closer to that salvation which is promised us in Christ Jesus.

Originally Published in:
Vol. 24 No. 10 January 1965