

we might die to sin and live to righteousness." Family reunions will point to the truth that where two or three are gathered together, there Christ is in the midst, as well as to the family of the Redeemed, the clouds of witnesses, and the Church Triumphant that we shall ourselves join by God's grace before many more Christmases have passed. The dinners and the parties will speak of the Christ who hallowed feasts when he walked this earth and who constitutes "living Bread come down from heaven." The centrality of children at this blessed season should remind us that childlike faith before the mysteries of the Incarnation is a requisite for participation in his kingdom. And even (or especially?) the archetypal and ubiquitous Santa Claus, who comes from a numinous land of snow-white purity to give gifts to those who have nothing of their own, proclaims to all who have ears to hear the message of the entrance of God into our sinful world to "give gifts to men."

Although total appropriation and reconsecration of the traditional elements, in what Montgomery calls "the way of Affirmation," has some value, it also seems to be somewhat strained, highly subjective, even fanciful. I do not believe it is the best answer to the problem.

- D. A fourth answer is that we should affirm the biblical elements and use rather than abuse the traditional elements, by emphasizing the biblical elements as always primary and essential, and by regarding the traditional elements as always secondary and non-essential.

It really is not crucial to the meaning of Christmas if our families are providentially hindered from being together, or if we can't have a big Christmas dinner, or if we can't afford to give the kind or size or number of gifts we would like to or feel we ought to, or if we can't send out two hundred greeting cards, or if we don't have a white Christmas. These things are not essential to the meaning of Christmas. What is crucial is the biblical elements; and we ought to stress these as primary, and the traditional elements as secondary.

Conclusion

Let us than focus our attention during this Christmas on the elements biblically associated with the meaning of Christmas. Even though there are few shopping days remaining, there is still enough time to do this!

Let us place the emphasis on: