

# THE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

Manly P. Hall, President and Founder

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CONTRIBUTORS' BULLETIN - December, 1982

## A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE



DEAR FRIENDS:



In recent years, many persons have taken a cynical attitude toward the Christmas holidays. This is only one aspect of a widespread disillusionment, and many take it for granted that a beautiful, spiritual tradition is now being exploited and commercialized. We should remember, however, that the birthday of Jesus Christ is one of the most significant events in the history of the world. We cannot afford to allow our resentments against the abuses which have arisen in our economics-oriented way of life to interfere with the expression of our natural reverence for the nativity of our Lord and the day which has been set aside to commemorate this wondrous event.

Widespread unemployment and a serious inflation may restrict the exchanging of expensive gifts this year. This may help many people to realize that we cannot fulfill the ritual of Christmas by expensive shopping tours. For many years we have tried to please our relatives and friends by gifts which we hope they will appreciate. We give things that are neither needed nor wanted and receive the like in exchange. This secular practice may benefit and comfort the merchant and gain for ourselves some small measure of appreciation. It certainly has little to do with the essential meaning of this sacred day. The fallacy of the prevailing practice is more or less irritating to the average citizen. He thinks of the money that he is required to spend at the season when his taxes come due and he must pay his insurance premium. He also has a melancholy realization of parking problems, store congestions, and waiting in line for gift wrapping.

We like to think of Christmas as a children's festival. The traditional child featured in older story books was one of the first victims of alleged progressive education. By the time a youngster is eight or ten years old, he is reading Hemingway and Joyce, arguing the authenticity of unidentified flying objects, and mastering the intricacies of computerization. He also suffers from the belief that the essential duty of his parents is to cater to his often expensive whims. A number of young people will find the family budget considerably curtailed, and there will be more time to contemplate the mystical overtones of the

Christmas festival. Money had been used as an alleged substitute for practically all the natural graces of the human being. We try to buy respect, affection, and influence, but in most instances we are unsuccessful.

This Christmas might be an excellent opportunity to restore a more personal relationship with those for whom we have special regard. Inflation has raised the price of Christmas cards and the cost of mailing them. The sentiments are usually printed and reveal very little intimate thoughtfulness. In most cases it is not only cheaper but more gracious to pick up the telephone and deliver your message in person. We can ask about the children, show concern for the family health, and prove beyond all question that we wish to share the joys of the season. If we feel that a gift is indicated, the time has come to focus attention upon items necessary or useful. Instead of trying to decide whether the daughter-in-law will rejoice upon receiving a cut-glass pickle dish, remember that she has growing children and is making payments on necessary utilities. As a last recourse, send her a check for the amount of the pickle dish.

Family photographs by the amateur photographer in the family will bring a moment of pleasure and interest to aunts, uncles, and surviving grandparents. One thrifty person I know had the photograph printed on a postcard in order to save the price of an envelope. With fifty percent of Americans on diets, it is advisable that food gifts should be staple groceries. It is unkind to send a friend who is struggling to reduce calories a beautiful box of chocolate bonbons or a basket of candied fruits. In passing, a bottle of distilled spirits is also contrary to the ethics of the season.

To many, the Christmas dinner is a meaningful event. In older days, several families united their efforts in the preparation of a virtual banquet. Here again the nutritionists have issued gloomy prognostications. We are warned of the danger of carbohydrates, and that high sodium brings arteriosclerosis. Nearly all the traditional recipes are out of bounds for health seekers. When the time comes, however, most of the guests decide to make the Christmas dinner an exception, but inflation indicates the need for economy. If the meal is more simple, the guests may begin to realize that they have gathered to break bread as a kind of sacrament. We should be grateful that our loved ones are gathered with us, and we should also remember the blessings we have shared in the past year, the protections which have helped to sustain us, and the wonderful privilege of honorable and sincere friendship.

It was once said of the Greeks that they built their cities as though they expected to live forever, and feasted as though they would die tomorrow. The religious aspect of Christmas should always be strongly emphasized. Those who are nominally religious should attend the church of their choice where appropriate sentiments will be expressed by the clergyman and there will often be musical events. Others may choose a family service at home which may include the reading of selections from sacred books and a brief prayer or meditation. Some have found great spiritual inspiration from visiting some national park to commune with nature and experience the reality of nature's God. Whenever possible,

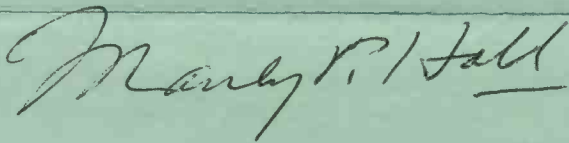
it is a gracious gesture to personally visit those elderly or infirm. In older days, Christmas caroling brought special cheer to the occasion. This practice survives in some rural areas and in foreign countries, but there are usually appropriate programs on radio or television. If there happens to be a musician in the family, old well-loved songs can add a note of nostalgia. This reminds me of my illustrious Grandmother. In her later years, she was badly crippled with arthritis in her hands. There was an old upright piano with shelves built into the sides to hold flower pots. On Christmas, Grandmother always insisted on giving a concert. She was not always able to span the octave, but she was always willing to try.

Her voice was rather weak and there was a quaver in it, but the old Christmas hymns were especially charming and no one really cared if she hit wrong notes now and then. In due course, she stated firmly that all the family should gather round and join in the singing. Even now, one can wish that those gentle occasions were not fading memories. I can still see her seated in a large rocking chair with her four grandchildren sitting at her feet. She slowly put on her gold-rimmed spectacles which hung low on her nose while she read the nativity stories in the books of the New Testament. She would interrupt occasionally to describe some great church or cathedral she had seen in her travels. Everything religious was especially important because she wanted her grandchildren to live a good Christian life.

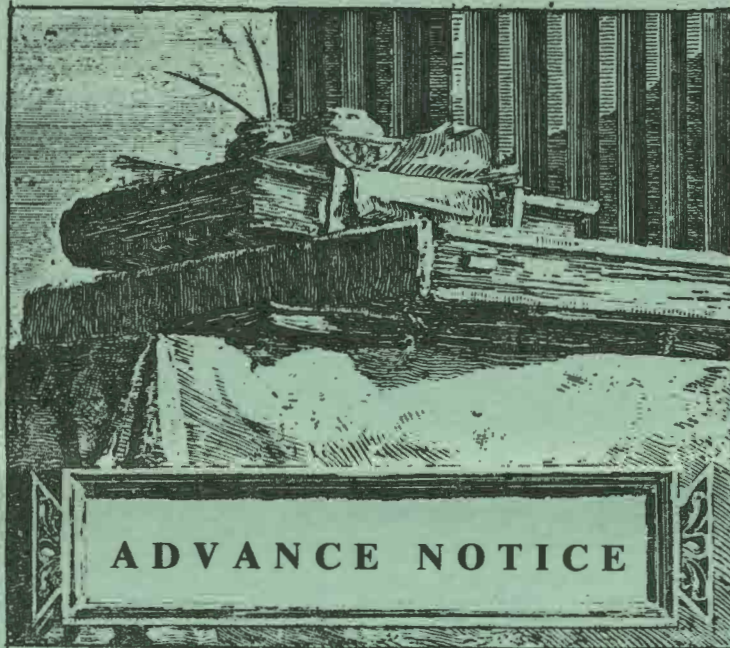
The church Grandmother usually attended always prepared baskets and boxes for needy families. The gifts included food and clothing and toys for the children, and Grandmother had a long talk with the minister explaining that the Christmas packages should be given anonymously because they were not merely the charity of the parishioners. They were like the gifts of the Wise Men. The Christ in the giver honored the Christ in the receiver. The whole mystery was beyond the material world in a realm presided over by the love of God.

May you all have the kind of Christmas that Grandmother would consider to be appropriate.

Most sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Manly P. Hall". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

MANLY P. HALL



## PRS LIBRARY BOOK SALE

April 23, Saturday / 9:30 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

April 24, Sunday / 9:30 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.

This sale presents an opportunity to dispose of surplus books which could be helpful to others.

Manly P. Hall personally goes through all the books that come in for the Book Sale. Some are saved for the PRS Library, some will be sold, and some interesting duplications will be put up for auction. We have a copy of *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* from the original printings of 1928 in good to fair condition; the binding shows signs of wear but the text is in excellent condition. Mail order bids may be submitted. The retail price on this volume, when available, is approximately \$750.

This is our one sale of the year and every cent is used for the Philosophical Research Society—in the library, the auditorium, or for helping to defray expenses in the landscaping of the premises.

We are asking for your help. At the same time, you may very well be helping yourself to clear space for other things—like more books from the April Book Sale.

★ Bring books at any time. Contact Pearl Thomas for further information at 663-2167.