

NATIVITY

THE AMERICAN ESSAYIST AND PHILOSOPHER EMERSON RECOUNTS AN INTERESTING LITTLE EPISODE, EXPERIENCED BY HIM, WHILE TRAVELING IN BUS. TIRED AND DISGRUNTLED, HE ENTERED THE BUS ON A HOT SUMMER'S DAY, WEARILY LOOKING FORWARD TO THE DISCOMFORT OF A HALF-HOUR'S JOURNEY. THE OTHER PASSENGERS SAT AS DROWSILY AND DISPIRITED, AS HE DID; UNTIL AT ONE OF THE STOPS A YOUNG WOMAN ENTERED THE BUS WITH HER GOLDEN-HAIRED, BLUE-EYED LITTLE SON. THEY HAD HARDLY TAKEN THEIR SEATS IN A CORNER OF THE BUS, WHEN THE MOOD OF THE PASSENGERS WAS COMPLETELY CHANGED. IT SEEMED AS THOUGH FROM THE CHILD'S EVERY QUESTION, EVERY SMILE, EVERY LAUGH, A BREATH OF PARADISE WERE WAFTED TOWARD THE PEOPLE SOURED BY THE DRUDGERY OF LIFE. THE MOTHER HELD HER LIVELY BOY, SO SNUGLY AND LOVINGLY IN HER ARMS AND ^P SPOKE TO HIM SO TENDERLY THAT THE EYES OF ALL THE PASSENGERS REMAINED FIXED UPON THEM AND A MYSTERIOUS WARMTH SOFTENED THEIR NUMBED HEARTS.

DEAR FATHERS AND BROTHERS IN CHRIST. THE BUS CALLED EARTH BY THE ASTRONOMERS HAS WHIRLED WITH UNIMAGINABLE VELOCITY FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, WITH ITS MILLIONS AND MILLIONS OF STRUGGLING EXHAUSTED PASSENGERS, NINETY NINE PER CENT OF WHICH DID NOT EVEN KNOW WHITHER THEY WERE JOURNEYING. NINETEEN HUNDRED YEARS AGO, A YOUNG MOTHER ENTERED WITH HER FAIRHAired, SMILING BRIGHT LITTLE CHILD. HARDLY HAD SHE SETTLED DOWN IN A CORNER, IN THE BETHLEHEM GROTTO, WHEN SONGS OF GOOD WILL FLOODED THE SPACE AND CELESTIAL MESSENGERS BROUGHT GOOD TYDINGS TO THE PASSENGERS, WHOSE SOULS WERE FILLED WITH A WARMTH THEY HAD NEVER FELT BEFORE.

THE SAVIOUR IS BORN TODAY. GAUDEAMUS. THERE IS NO ROOM FOR SADNESS ON THE BIRTH-DAY OF LIFE. FEAR OF DEATH IS GONE AND OUR SOULS ARE FILLED WITH GLADNESS AT THE PROSPECT OF EVERLASTING LIFE.