



Once for a Shining Hour: Reflections for Christmas

Lawrence Webb

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Many things in our daily lives can remind us of the significance of Jesus coming into the world--the difference His birth, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection have made in countless individual lives and on the course of world history.

These reflections were inspired by a variety of sources: a newspaper column comparing Christmas to marriage; American and German soldiers who stopped fighting to celebrate Christmas Eve and Christmas Day; a living, breathing three-inch-tall Santa in a department store; a drama about men held captive by terrorists; a three-year-old's first Christmas pageant; a quote from "Hamlet" in a TV Christmas drama; a painting in a gift shop in a London church; a somber family Christmas letter detailing the young husband's struggle with cancer; traditional Christmas stories: Charles Dickens's Ebenezer Scrooge, O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi," and Henry Van Dyke's "The Story of the Other Wise Man."

Songs of the season gave cause for some of the reflections: secular and sacred, old and new, from Canada, England, and America. The author also includes two original carols set to familiar hymn tunes.

The title essay is based on the plainest of tree ornaments: a flat, clear plastic disc with the inscription: "Once for a shining hour, heaven touched the earth."

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