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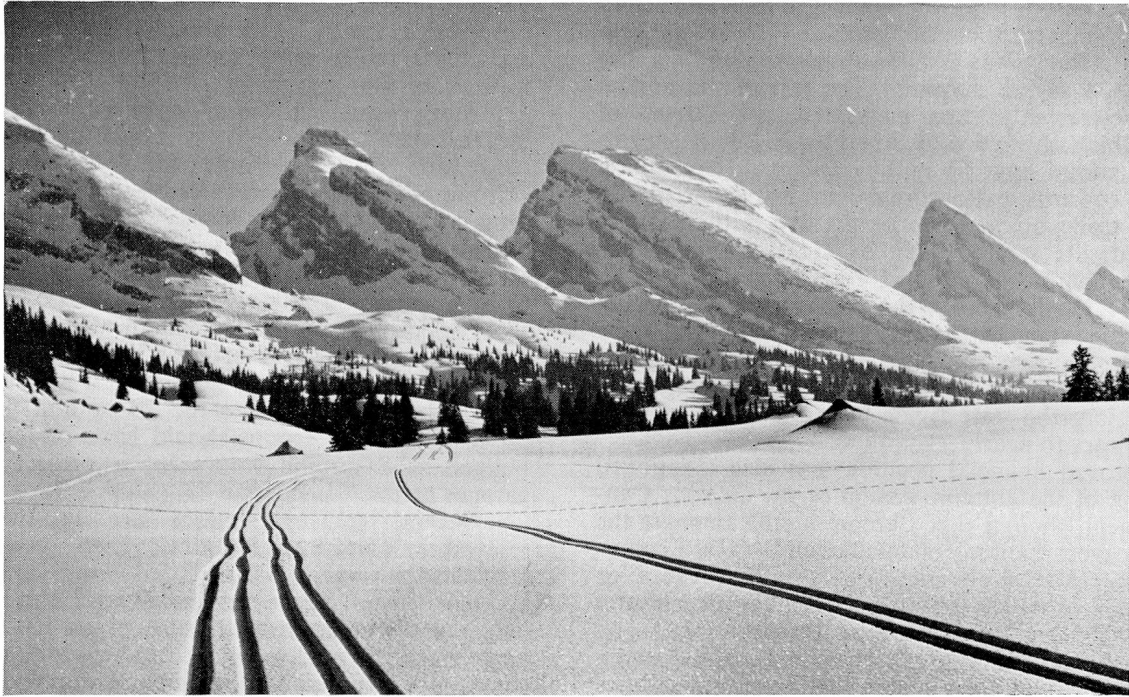
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A few weeks ago the thought of Christmas might well have been pushed aside in the anxiety over the Cuban crisis. Realising only too well how close to the abyss we were we could not help wondering what the world would look like by the end of the year. And yet the knowledge of a higher power guiding our destiny kept us from despair and filled us with hope as again and again during dark hours in the past. For nigh two thousand years ago Christ Child was born in Bethlehem to be the Saviour of Mankind, and we have been spared once again.

The New Year lies ahead of us like the virgin snow on the picture. The path may be there, clear and straight and easy to follow. Or perhaps we have to make a new track with less ease and there may be trouble on the way. But whatever lies in store for us the knowledge that we are not alone on our journey should fill us with confidence and should make us start the new year with hope and humble gratitude.

William Ewart Gladstone said in a speech nearly one hundred years ago that Christianity would find a way.

“Who can with just and firm hand sever the transitory from the durable? Who can combine in the measures which reason would prescribe reverence and gratitude to the past with a sense of the new claims, new means, new duties of the present? Who can be stout and earnest to do battle for the truth and yet hold sacred, as he ought, the freedom of enquiry and cherish as he ought a chivalry of controversy? Let us be persuaded of this, that Christianity will by her inherent resources find for herself a philosophy equal to all the shifting and the growing wants of the time. The Christianity which is now and hereafter to flourish and through its power in the inner circles of human thought to influence ultimately, in some manner more adequately than now, the masses of mankind, must be such as of old the Wisdom of God was described.”

Let us go forward into the New Year, hoping that we may find the brightness of the everlasting light to guide us on our path, “not subject to hurt, loving the thing that is good, quick, ready to do good, kind to man, steadfast and sure”.