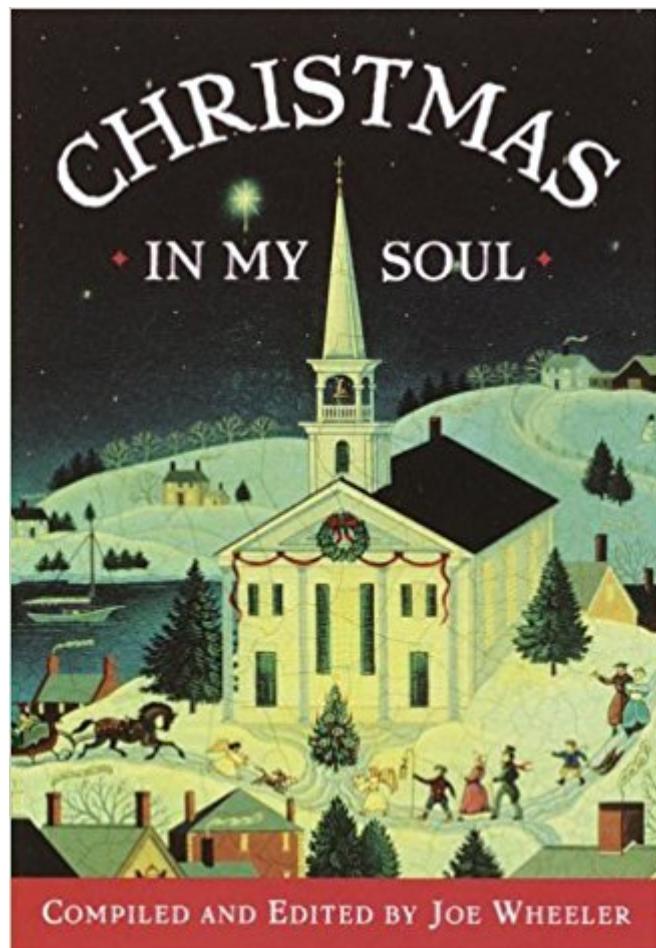


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Christmas In My Soul, Volume I



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Customer Reviews

Christmas in My Soul is the fifth in editor Joe Wheeler's popular series of heartwarming Christmas stories (previous volumes are titled Christmas in My Heart). This anthology begins with an introduction describing the transformation of the real St. Nicholas into the world-famous character of Santa Claus, emphasizing the spiritual significance of Santa's generosity. Wheeler's introduction sets the stage for six short, old-fashioned holiday stories, illustrated with beautiful woodcuts, about the everyday miracles that can happen on this hallowed Christian holiday. The stories' settings range from New York City to small towns such as "Hollis Hollow, USA." The characters in each story are struggling to live well, and they are taught to succeed by accidents of grace. There is always a moral to these stories, and each lesson warms even the coldest winter nights. --Paul Power

Why The Minister Did Not ResignAuthor UnknownOne of the first Christmas stories I can remember my mother reciting--almost all were by memory--is this one. My mother puts all of herself into her recitations: laughing in hilarious passages and crying in moving ones. This is one of her tearjerkers: to the best of my knowledge, she never got through this Hatfield-McCoyish tale dry-eyed. Neither did her audiences. He waited until she put the baby down, then he met her in the middle of the room and said it. "I shall do it next Sabbath, Rebekah.""O Julius, not NEXT Sabbath!" she cried out in dismay. "Why, next Sabbath is Christmas, Julius!" Julius Taft's smooth-shaven lips curled into a

smile. "Well, why not, little woman? It would be a new way to celebrate Christmas. Everyone likes a 'new way.' The holly and the carols are so old!""Julius!""Forgive me, dear; but my heart is bitter. I cannot bear it any longer. I shall do it next week, Rebekah." "But afterward, Julius?" The mother's eyes wandered to the row of little chairs against the wall, each with its neatly folded little clothes. There were three little chairs and the baby's crib. Afterward, what about those? They argued mutely against this thing. "Afterward, I'll dig ditches to earn bread for the babies--don't worry, little mother!" He laughed unsteadily. Then he drew her down with him on the sofa. "Let's have it out, dear. I've borne it alone as long as I can." "Alone!" she scolded softly. "Julius Taft, you know I've been bearing it with you!" "I know it, dear; but we've both kept still. Now let's talk it out. It's no use beating about the bush, Rebekah, I've got it to do." "O Julius, if we could only peacemake!" she wailed. "But we can't--not even the minister's little peacemaker wife. They won't let us do it--they'd rather wrangle." She put her hand across his lips to stifle the ugly word; but she knew it applied. "They don't realize, Julius. If Mrs. Cain and Mrs. Drinkwater would only realize! They influence all the rest. Everyone would make up, if they would. They're the ones to peacemake, Julius." "Yes, but Drinkwaters and Cains won't 'peacemake'--you can't make oil and water unite. There was a grudge between them three generations ago, and it's descending. I can't see any way out of it." "But on Christmas, Julius! 'Peace on earth, good will to men,'" Rebekah Taft murmured softly. The minister sighed heavily. "There isn't any 'peace, good will' in the Saxon church, Rebekah. "It won't be any special service. It will be just like all the other services, only the minister will resign." "But he will preach a Christmas sermon, Julius? Tell me he will!" pleaded the minister's little peacemaker wife. "Yes, dear, he will preach a Christmas sermon to please his little wife." They sat quite silent awhile. The sleeping baby nestled and threw out a small pink and white hand aimlessly. The clock on the painted mantel said, "Bedtime, bedtime, bedtime!" with monotonous repetition. They were both very tired, but they still sat side by side on the hard little sofa, thinking the same sorrowful thoughts. It was the wife who first broke the silence. "Dear, there are so many things to think about," she whispered. He smiled down at her from his superior height. "Four things," he counted on his fingers. "Katie, Julius Junior, Hop-o'-My-Thumb, and the baby!" "Yes, I meant the children. If you--" Julius Taft was big and broad-shouldered. He drew himself up and faced her. His lean, good face was the face of a man who would create the opportunity that he could not find ready to his hand. "Did the children's mother think all I could do was to preach?" he cried gaily. He could not bear the worry in her dear face. "She's forgotten I blew the bellows in my father's smithy. I can blow them again! I can find good, honest work in God's world, dear heart, never fear, and it will be infinitely better than preaching to a divided people." "Yes, it will be better," she agreed; and then they

listened to the clock. The little church at Saxon had its feud. It had brought it a certain kind of fame in all the countryside. Other churches pointed to it with indulgent pity. Strangers over in Krell and Dennistown were regaled with entertaining accounts of how the Saxon congregation was divided by the broad aisle into two hostile factions, and no man stepped across. "It's the dead line," chuckled the Krell newsmonger in chief. "No one but the minister dares go across! Those for the Cain side sit on one side of the aisle, and those for the Drinkwater side sit on the other. The gallery is reserved for neutrals, but it's always empty! They make it terribly hard for their parson over there in Saxon." The Krell newspaper was right. It was terribly hard for the minister at Saxon. For eight years he and his gentle little wife had struggled to calm the troubled waters, but still they flowed on turbulently. Still there was discord, whichever way one turned. Another congregation might have separated farther than a broad aisle's width long ago, and worshipped in two churches instead of one. But the Saxon congregation had its own way of doing things. Its founders had been original, and generation upon generation had inherited the trait. Midway in the week preceding Christmas, Julius Taft came to the little parsonage nursery, with signals of fresh distress plainly hoisted.

"Well?" Rebekah Taft stopped rocking and waited. The baby in her arms lurched joyously toward the tall figure. "Well, Julius?" "Please, ma'am, may I come in and grumble? I'm 'that' full I can't hold in! Here, give me the youngster. What do you suppose has happened now, little woman?" "The church has blown up!" guessed Rebekah. "Not yet, but the fuse is lighted. I've just found out about the Christmas music. I hoped they would not have any." "O Julius, so did I! It will be sure to make trouble." "It's made it already. That's IT! I've just found out that Mrs. Cain is drilling her little Lethia to sing a carol; you know she has a beautiful little voice." "Yes, oh, yes, as clear as a bird's. Why won't it be beautiful to have her sing, Julius?" "Because Mrs. Drinkwater is drilling Gerry to sing," the minister said dryly. "Oh!" "And it won't be a duet, little woman." They both laughed, and the shrill crow of the baby chimed in. Only the baby's laugh was mirthful. The minister's worn face sobered quickly. "I don't know how it will come out," he sighed. "They are both very determined, and the hostile feeling is so strong. I wish it might have held off a little longer--till you and I got back to the smithy, dear!"

I really appreciate the history of St. Nicholas/Santa Claus. Very enlightening. Stories are wonderful. Received all my books in excellent condition as well as very promptly.

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