

CHRISTMAS

By Alden Truesdell

God was early recognized as the Santa Claus of the sanctified. If one could be good enough, God would give him the things that he prayed for, much as Santa brings the presents on the Christmas list. After the delivery of the gifts, the Delivery Boy was supposed to withdraw and in no manner propel His presence into the general enjoyment of the celebration. The magnificence of God's presence might prove embarrassing.

After God has set up the Christmas tree of creation, trimmed it with such rare ornaments as only the fabulous Father of Lights could conceive and construct, loaded it with presents so valuable as to be priceless, the Paternal Philanthropist might expect to witness the appreciation that is a parent's pleasure. He might even expect a bid to the party, but the people are just too busy, as God can see for Himself.

This condition is not peculiar to this generation, but is an ancient and general reaction. As far back in the records as Deuteronomy we read:

"Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God; . . . lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God. . . . But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth."

Instead of incessant petition to a spiritual Santa Claus, what if our prayers were charged with invitation to God to attend the holiday festival as a house guest? Conditions will never be better for enticing and entertaining God than in that time when many members of the community of Christendom have been distracted from the restrictions of constant receiving to an outsurging release of the generosity of Giving. God is always on the giving hand, as is Santa Claus; and the spirit of giving, spreading through the race like an epidemic, takes the individuals out of themselves to such an extent as to make room for God. God would live with us all the time, if we would make room for Him; but, as long as the consciousness is filled with the self, there is no room for the spiritual Saviour. There is no room in the inn for the Christ Principle with Its sufficiency. But that time when the attention is distracted from stubborn selfishness to the godly goodness of giving may be the expected but unpredictable time when "in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

Man is a chronic grabber and getter. He is a spasmodic and sometimes generous giver. But the former practice has overbalanced and upset the normal function of the law of giving and receiving. Man's emphasis upon demand has been so great that the impulsion has carried him far beyond his base of supply. He has gained his objective in the world, but lost his supply of soul substance in the process. The race therefore must return - return to normalcy, which, actually, is spirituality; for man is not normal except he be whole, and man is not whole except he be spiritually established and directed.

If we invite God to be our guest in our prayers to Him, we may uncover that Kingdom where God is with man, where He is their God and they are His

people. The Christmas spirit with its Christ-birth celebration, even with its exaggerated practice of haphazard giving, is an escape valve and a healing release of pent-up powers of individual and racial growth. The surge and splurge of promiscuous giving is the greatest health-promoting practice known to man. It is a spree to be sure, and has a tendency to get out of hand. There may be a hangover from the indulgence of the intoxicating wine of giving and living, but it will be as a convalescence from a successful and beneficial operation. The patient will improve and increase in favor with God and man. The race will be in a happier, healthier state of mind and condition of affairs.

"Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,
And not in thee, thou art still
forlorn."

We might consider the declaration of the little rhyme and say, "If Christ is born in you, you are not forlorn." If Christ is born in you, the transcendent descriptions become commonplace and even inadequate. With the Advent of Christ in consciousness, you cease to exist and begin to live. Birth and death in the world give place to spiritual illumination and resurrection into eternal Life.

If Christ is born in you, there will be grateful acknowledgment to all the inspired down through the centuries, who have honored this Christ birth in song and story, even though the finest literature leaves much to be desired in the way of description.

If Christ is born in you, you will accept for that baby Deity the adulation of all nature. The multitude of thoughts will recognize this saving Infant. All the faculties of being will come to His crib, for this Projection of Perfection is a tiny replica of "the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Therefore praise God for Christmas as a medium through which the Giver of all good and perfect gifts circulates His contagion and establishes His service in His own household, His own creation!

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THE HOLINESS OF GOD

By Robert Applegate

One facet of God's nature that is stressed throughout Scripture, but is rarely emphasized today, is that of holiness. Perhaps the best known exposition of this quality of Deity is contained in Isaiah's description of his vision in the temple:

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and His train filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.'"

Holiness is specifically that which distinguishes God from man. We say that God is Life, Love, Intelligence, Substance, Beauty, and Power; that He is

Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence. But, in so doing, we do not begin to tell what God is. All these terms are derived from our everyday experience, and thus we describe God in human terms, although we realize that He must be wholly other than man. We realize that God does not live as we live, nor love as we love; but that God is infinite Life, infinite Love, infinite Intelligence, etc. But God is also surpassingly more than this. He is That of which we can say nothing. He is the Indescribable, before which we can only stand in awe. This is the significance of the word holy. Holiness is the objective fact to which the subjective response is one of awe and wonder. This is brought out clearly in the passage from Isaiah. It is indicated even more forcibly in the description of another vision, which the Apostle John had on the Island of Patmos:

"Lo, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne! . . . Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads. . . .

"And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind. . . . And day and night they never cease to sing, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!' And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who is seated on the throne and worship Him who lives for ever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing, 'Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created.'"

Holiness, then, is that which is indescribable. We cannot say what it is; we can only suggest it by such terms as: august, wholly other, majestic, transcendent, sublime, ineffable, inconceivable, the beyond. The word heaven also has this connotation. The Father in heaven is the holy, the ineffable Father. Holiness, however, is more than an aspect of God's nature; it is God's nature. God is the Holy One, whom we must approach with reverence and awe. This fact is conveyed in the Bible in many passages, which, if analyzed logically, are repellent; but which, rightly understood, convey as adequately as is possible the transcendent nature of God. Thus we read:

"God is clothed with terrible majesty."
"The Lord, the Most High, is terrible, a great King over all the earth."
"Let them praise thy great and terrible Name."
"I praise thee for thou art fearful and wonderful."
"Let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire."
"Who shall not fear and glorify thy Name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy."

Although holiness cannot be described conceptually, it can be experienced; and it has been experienced to some degree by every spiritual leader. To this awareness of holiness the first reaction is always a feeling of awe and dread, even of fear. This is accompanied by a consciousness of utter personal unworthiness which is not related to a person's virtue or lack of it, according to human standards, but which is the realization by the creature of his nothingness in the face of his Creator. We see this reaction in the account of Isaiah, who, in the midst of his vision, cried, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean

lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Peter had the same experience, when he first caught a glimpse of Christ's divinity; and he exclaimed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Further if we read the accounts carefully we can see that everyone of the prophets and apostles had a similar experience. Even John, after he had been Jesus Christ's constant companion for three years, when he had his vision on Patmos, fall at the feet of Christ "as though dead."

The experience of the holiness of God, however, never stops with the overpowering consciousness of personal nothingness. After having humbled the personal ego, God as it were, stoops to pick up the prostrated form; and the second experience is one of purification, commission, and dedication. Every man who has had an experience of holiness has in that instant become a different person. Isaiah felt the seraphim touching his lips with a burning coal, and he was sent forth to speak to the king and the people with authority and power. Peter became the leader of the early Christians, to whom they looked for strength and guidance. John, after he had fallen down as though dead, was lifted up and set again on his feet, and was told to write what he saw. Every prophet and apostle who spoke fearlessly and knowingly in the Name of God did so because he had caught a glimpse of holiness. These men were unafraid because, after seeing the transcendence of God, nothing human could daunt them. They were sure of themselves because they knew that what they had experienced is more real than anything in the world.

Organized religion tacitly recognizes the supreme importance of the direct experience of holiness and it tries to create it by the use of solemn music, impressive ritual, and magnificent pageantry. But it is God alone that is holy, and it is before Him alone that we are to stand in awe. The religious leader will of course agree with this and say that his methods are merely means to that end; but more often they are means to the obscuring of that end, which is to become conscious of Holiness Itself. The church-goer, instead of revering God and worshipping Him, too often reveres, and actually worships, the church.

Jesus Christ was "holiness made manifest," as was declared before His birth, when the angel announced to Mary, "The child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." Jesus Christ was Holiness in a bodily form; and, as He went about His ministry, whenever people perceived What He really was, they were both astounded and frightened. "And they were on the road," we read, "going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid." This reaction was common, especially among Jesus' closest disciples. But no one has changed the world as those men did.

Jesus taught us that God is the immanent Father, who loves us, cares for us, and supplies our every need, even before we are conscious of that need; but, in so doing, He did not minimize the transcendence and majesty and glory of God. When He prayed, He addressed God, not simply as "Father," but as "Holy Father." Constantly, He referred to God's Presence, which abides among them who seek It, as the Holy Spirit. And, in the prayer that He taught us, the first petition is "Hallowed be thy Name." The first thing, therefore, that we are to pray for is that we may stand in awe of God's Name, that we may revere and worship that Name, that we may always regard it as holy; for it is holy.

We never want to lose sight of the holiness of God; for God is primarily the Holy One, and it is because He is That that He is our Redeemer and our Saviour.

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YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN

By Nell Truesdell

No person remembers the actual experience of his birth. All he knows is that he survived the experience. In later life, he may be told about his behavior upon his entrance into the world; but, usually, he learns neither his conduct nor that of the adults involved. He is not likely to be told that his audacious intrusion among his fellows was most unwelcome (as is generally the case); for such a confession on the part of his progenitors would be an admission of their failure to prevent his appearance. It is evident, however, that, by his determination to be born, he met and overcame any opposition that his parents offered. To accomplish the feat of conception, he was forced to utilize the only process at his disposal, that of generation. To survive conception, he did not hesitate to push his desire to be clothed in the flesh until that end was attained.

Millions of babies suffer a prenatal persecution, the like of which is seldom tolerated among civilized adult human beings. However after a person has thrust himself into the scene of human relations, the vigorous opposition that he has stirred up gradually melts and changes into softened feelings of acceptance and sympathetic consideration for his helplessness.

Man, born into the world, soon learns to take his place among his contemporaries. He is content to adjust himself to the demands of his environment. Often, he openly affiliates with some religious sect that seems to offer him the best opportunities to repair his wrongdoings. He is the natural man, who accepts the limitations of mortality and the course of human existence without question until he awakes to the realization that there is a definite end involved that heretofore has escaped his attention. When a person arrives at this point in his development, he either faces the inevitable in fear and trembling or he begins to cast about for a way of escape. Vaguely, he feels there ought to be a better and more prolonged way of life; but, upon turning to his church to find that way, to his consternation, he finds that the church itself points directly to death and the grave, teaching that the Kingdom of God and life everlasting are attainable only after death. In this it allies itself with the perishable flesh and an unstable world.

The opposition to physical conception is slight when compared to that which meets the spiritual conception that takes place in a man's consciousness when he begins to search for a way out of the maze of mortality. Generally, a man has but a shallow interest in the things of God until he discovers that the world offers no reward for a lifetime of devotion to it and its ways. Then, if he is acquainted with Scripture, he may begin to search there for instructions pertaining to a way of life that is not obscured by the mists of mortal illusion. He may study such announcements as these:

"I Am the Lord, I change not."

"I Am That I Am: . . . this is my Name for ever."

"Be still, and know that I Am God."

"Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts."

"My soul, wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from Him."

"The grave cannot praise Thee; death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day."
"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."
"I and My Father are one."

The man, earnest in his search, is led immediately to an Identity within himself that is independent of mortality. He discovers Its Name is I Am and that It has existed from the beginning. Paradoxically, however, his first reaction when he stumbles upon the spiritual Identity within himself is that of wrathful indignation against Its disturbing influence. He deals out harassing and oppressive treatment to the spiritual Identity within himself, for the reason that he senses that It will demand full, unshared possession of his consciousness. He strives against dispossessing his human ego to the point of seeking to annihilate the spiritual Identity; but, in his attempt, he destroys only his mortal self, and he will be forced to repeat his lesson at another time.

The spiritual Identity cannot be killed. If It is spurned, It will retreat and lie quiescent beneath the level of man's awareness, where it will await a more opportune time to reveal Itself. Unlike the unborn human infant, who is the fruit of generation, and who will not be thwarted in his desire to be born into the world, the spiritual Identity, the fruit of regeneration, will not force Itself upon man's attention. It will make Its appearance only when a man turns his attention toward It within himself, and It will take form only when that attention toward It is steadfast.

The Identity of God in man is Spirit, changeless, indestructible, immaculate, eternal. The human being is not this Reality. The human being does not change into this Reality. The human being lets go of being human by turning the attention of his mind firmly toward the inherent divine Identity until he loses consciousness of himself as mortal. In this way he attains a consciousness of Immortality. He is reborn or born again.

Alphabet of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
FOR EVERY WEEK DAY OF THE MONTH

DECEMBER 1952

1. Be exalted, O God, ABOVE the heavens.
2. Thy lovingkindness is BEFORE mine eyes.
3. In this will I be CONFIDENT.
4. DELIVER me in Thy righteousness.
5. How EXCELLENT is Thy Name!
6. With Thee is the FOUNTAIN of life.
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8. How GREAT is Thy GOODNESS!
9. I HAVE loved the HABITATION of Thy HOUSE.
10. INCLINE my heart unto Thy testimonies.
11. JUSTICE and JUDGMENT are the habitation of Thy throne.
12. Let Thy merciful KINDNESS be for my comfort.
13. In Thy LIGHT shall we see LIGHT.
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15. In the MORNING will I direct MY prayer unto Thee.
16. I will wait on Thy NAME.
17. Thou OPENEST Thine hand.
18. I will sing PRAISE to Thy Name.
19. Many waters cannot QUENCH love.
20. He RESTORETH my soul,
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22. The Lord is my SHEPHERD.
23. God is my high TOWER.
24. This Man hath an UNCHANGEABLE priesthood
25. He hast VISITED and redeemed His people.
26. The WORDS of the Lord are pure WORDS.
27. All the promises of God in Him are YEA.
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29. He is my refuge and my fortress.
30. The Lord reigneth.
31. He is clothed with majesty.

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"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

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As electricity is the working power of the electrical principle,
SPIRITICITY is the working power of the Spiritual Principle.