

SPIRITICITY, December 1956

CHRISTMAS

By Robert Applegate

"God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

Christmas is the time for earnestly contemplating the Love of God. It is not the time for romanticizing over the infant Jesus receiving homage from the Magi and the shepherds. We love the Christmas stories because they are beautiful and familiar. Even after the passage of centuries, we can still sense the Holy Presence of the Spirit when we read, or hear, the accounts. But the details of Jesus' birth are relatively unimportant; whereas the Purpose of that birth - or the Incarnation - is of the greatest importance to all of us.

It is not believing that Jesus was born in a manger in Bethlehem that gives us the gift of eternal life. It is believing that Jesus was the Incarnate Word of God, the Christ. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name. . . . He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. . . . I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

In recent years, there has been a move to "Put Christ back into Christmas." We must by all means do so. And a first step in this direction should be to consider just where we would be if Jesus Christ had not come in the flesh. We may thus catch some inkling of the significance of the Incarnation, and what it means to us. If we do see this, even in a small degree, there will well up an overwhelming sense of gratitude, which will make us very humble and very still.

For many, Christmas has become a burden. They feel that they ought to entertain, that they ought to give something to this person and that person; whereas they ought to do no such things but should, rather, remember the occasion of the celebration. The holidays are holy days and should be days of consideration of the transcendent Truth that was revealed to us in Jesus Christ. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." When we see this, we are filled with such gratitude that we want to share our joy, we want to give. "We love, because He first loved us." When we want to give, giving is not a burden but a pleasure. Then, instead of being depleted by the holidays, we are refreshed by them. We are rededicated to the one holy calling, which is to become ever more aware of the Infinite, Eternal Love of God. Jesus Christ showed us that this Love is always fully present with us and within us. That is the significance of Christmas.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. . . . And we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

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GREATER THINGS

By Marian Levering

"He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father."

Because they do not understand how a mortal can expect to do greater things than were done by the Master, people have puzzled over these words of Jesus Christ. They question how there can be anything greater to do, and how weak mortals can be expected to do greater works than were done by the Son of God. The text has baffled many, but Jesus Christ meant exactly what He said.

If we study the promise, we shall see that the greater things can be done because Jesus went to the Father. Since He was willing to go through the worldly phase of human existence - from birth to death and through death to the demonstration of eternal life - He revealed to us what, in truth, we are: immortal, spiritual beings. If Jesus had remained in His human aspect, we should have had a partial revelation of our divinity, not the full picture. Now, because of His Resurrection and Ascension, we have the perfect realization of our Sonship to God.

By going to the Father, Jesus released among men a Consciousness of their innate divinity. This Consciousness is a strong, pulsating Influence which men may lay hold of and by which they may enter into the realization of Christhood. This omnipresent Consciousness of Jesus Christ is ours to share.

Further, because of Jesus' Ascension, all consideration of human personality is removed. As Paul said, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh." When a great leader is present, we look to him for guidance. When he is gone, we must look to That which motivated and sustained him. Similarly, Jesus directed us to THAT which did all the mighty works through Him. Because Jesus went to the Father, we must look to, and find, that same Father within ourselves.

The "greater works" are going to be done only when the individual is completely as nothing, and the Consciousness of God supplants the personal self. They will be done when we know only One Doer, One Power, One Presence; and when we lose ourselves in that One.

What, then, are the "greater works"? Jesus healed the sick; He raised the dead; He forgave sins. The works will not be "greater" in being more impressive healings of this type, but rather in their scope. "The disciple is not above his Master." But because of the Fact of the Resurrection and the Ascension, men are more willing to accept both healing and teaching. Jesus was sent only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." His followers are sent into all the world, to "preach the Gospel to every creature," to heal every disease - because He went to the Father.

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PRESS ONWARD

By Nell Truesdell

In the early 1900's, children of a large city were not provided with public playgrounds furnished with the latest equipment for their pleasure and exercise. During summer vacations, Mama would allow me to go to our City Gymnasium once a week on girls' day, and there I could swim in the indoor pool and join in games with other children of my age. The equipment at the gymnasium, designed for men and scaled to adult size, taxed our small frames and undeveloped muscles.

The swinging rings fascinated and challenged me. Fourteen iron rings dangled from twenty-foot ropes that were spaced ten feet apart and nine feet above the floor. A movable platform enabled children to mount high enough to grasp the first ring, and the girl who followed the one suspended from the ring would give her a shove and off she would swing toward the second ring.

At first, the boundless space beneath and around me overpowered me and restrained my movements. It seemed so vast and I seemed so small. Too, because my grip was weak and my muscles frail, I could not take hold of the second ring as I approached it. On my first try, the shrieking girls behind me forced me to drop to the floor before I got anywhere. With persistence, however, I built up sufficient strength to carry my weight, and eventually the day came when I made it to the end of the line. Ultimately, I was able to make the triumphant return trip; and whenever any girl accomplished that feat, she was applauded.

I can still recall the exhilaration that filled my being when I made the first successful trip to the end of the line. The free swing, so high off the floor, the confident grasp from ring to ring, confirmed an inner power that sustained my body as it moved lightly through space.

Our progress in Truth is like that. We should refuse to remain in a state of half-knowing. We should determine to enter the very Kingdom of God. Our swing through this world can be weightless and smooth when we learn to let go one "ring" so that we may grasp another. The present limitation is not permanent; it is but an opportunity to be accepted and dealt with in an intelligent way. If the pressure of affairs shrieks at our heels, we may drop to a point of quietude and regain our strength for another attempt to move upward and forward successfully.

The power that we need is not outside but inside. The ability to do anything stems from the Holy Spirit that is the working Power of God. The intrepid Paul wrote: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

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SPIRITICITY, December 1956

SANTA CLAUS

By Alden Truesdell

The chief representative of the popular celebration of Christmas is a jolly person of ample proportions known as Santa Claus. He lives in the hearts and imaginations of millions of children in every part of the world, being addressed in some countries as Kriss Kringle or Saint Nicholas. But there is only one Santa Claus -- just as there is only One God, even though many people call Him by many names.

In the matter of prayerful relationship, Santa Claus is probably worshipped more sincerely, vitally, completely, and practically than is God by any of His many names. For those who subscribe to Santa Claus and worship him are the ones who are young in heart and who believe with every beat of that heart.

Children write letters to Santa Claus, setting forth those items which they consider desirable and acceptable; and these act as requisitions upon Santa's limitless stockpile of gifts. There is a certain teletype process of communication, whereby the letter burned in a fireplace or an ordinary kitchen stove is transmitted immediately to a sort of ticker tape in Santa's office. The delivery of the goods is a foregone conclusion; the order has been sent in.

The method of delivery is simple. Santa, this huge and happy individual, comes into each community every Christmas Eve after every child has gone to sleep. He descends into the home through the chimney, ample person, full pack, and all, to fill stockings and to scatter gifts in prepared places. Sometimes he even supplies the tree, with full trim. And while a few skeptics might detect some flaws in this belief and in dependence upon such a method of delivery, they are always discredited. For Santa always comes; and the requests are always fulfilled, sometimes over-subscribed, because of the faith of the Santa worshippers.

Santa Claus might be considered as the outer symbol of an inner Reality, which has been described in the words: "It is the Spirit in a man, the Breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand." This inner One has been called "the hidden man of the heart." Paul referred to It as "Christ in you."

Worshippers of this inner spiritual Being find a close parallel between their methods of communication and those used by Santa's devotees. In the first place they find it helpful to be as little children in their attitude toward this Wonderful One - to become amenable, to turn to Him with unquestioning faith, such as children have. They find the practice of being young in heart a prime asset.

The letters to Santa Claus can be likened to the prayers sent heavenward in the inner realm, where spiritual updrafts lift up the hopes of the petitioner. And, as the letters are miraculously delivered to Santa, so are the ponderous words of human prayer heard by the Father. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us. . . . It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Just as the letters to Santa are answered with gift upon gift, so are these prayers answered with surprising fulfillment. Sometimes the answer to prayer is so exact as to be startling, but mostly the delivery so far exceeds the request that there is no comparison. The method of prayer is as direct as the writing and sending of a letter to Santa Claus, and as simple.

Some persons say that they pray, and nothing happens. If they pray aright - and are young enough in heart - there will be, at a certain given time, an outpouring of blessings from the Giver of all good and perfect gifts. This will be in the fullness of time, which will be "the day of the Lord." It will be, for them, Christmas Day - the Day of Christ-birth.

And these worshippers will find that they have only to seek the Source; and without any list or request, they will have all good added unto them.

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SPIRITICITY, December 1956

THE LORD'S PRAYER

By H. B. Jeffery

(Continued from last month)

AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS

This should read, " . . . as we also have forgiven." And the word translated "debts" might be rendered obligations, sins, faults, shortcomings, emptinesses, trespasses, or offences. Taking this passage in a literal sense, we see a mind cognizant of the law of exact justice, of cause and effect, of action and reaction; a mind which knew that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

If we send forth thoughts of hate or revenge, there is a reaction; and we are soon the objects of hatred. If the thoughts and acts going forth from us be of love, our harvest is of the nature of love. If we wish forgiveness, we should be ready and willing at all times to grant the same to others. If occasion requires, we should do it "seventy times seven," or indefinitely.

But if we are unwilling to grant forgiveness, we should be courageous and sensible enough to accept the consequences of our own offences and unpaid obligations, and bear, as our own fault, the burdens that will inevitably come upon us. We should not be so foolish as to rail at the workings of "fate," nor decry the afflictions sent of the Lord; for we should know, as did the prophet Jeremiah, that a man's own thoughts, words, and deeds are his only burden.

Now let us get to a deeper meaning in this passage. To forgive is to give for. And to sin, fall short, or to be in debt evidences a lack of spiritual understanding, a lack of knowledge of the ways of God with men, whom He is ever blessing with all good gifts; and in whom, with His all-seeing eye, He beholds only that which is good.

And so the Prayer here demands, "Forgive" - or, "Thy fullness give for our lack and emptiness, that we may give to them that are empty. Give us knowledge of Thee, that we in turn may give the same to others."

Jesus said, "Feed My sheep"; and we can feed to others only that which we have. But if we do feed to others what little we may have of wisdom and understanding, ever keeping our eye on the one Source whence comes the light, we shall find that our wisdom and understanding are being increased.

As in the realm of nature there is no vacuum or empty space, so likewise in the spiritual Realm it holds good that if an emptiness be produced by our giving to another, it will be immediately filled by an influx from Spirit.

Moreover, as Spirit always works and does for man through the agency of man, if a man will cease seeing the sins, shortcomings, and offences in others he will find himself being blessed in many ways. Not only his understanding, but also his possession of whatever may be needful to his well-being, will be increased. As by magic, he will be "hid from the scourge of the tongue"; he will see the fulfillment of the promise, "They that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought."

Forgive - love - this is the central point of the spiritual life. And we must remember that these are not arbitrary words, telling us of an autocratic judge who refuses to forgive until we have done something on our part. No! These words of the Prayer embrace and express the supreme law of the spiritual life.

If we do not forgive those who trespass against us, neither can God forgive us our trespasses - not because He refuses to do so, or does not wish to; but because our soul is in such a condition that it is impossible for us to understand or receive the divine forgiveness.

When we think it out, we shall see how true this is. For if our soul is full of hatred or dislike or rancor or evil feeling, how is it possible for the Love of God, which is but another name for the forgiveness of sins, to flow in? What is meant by the "forgiveness of sins" is surely not merely an escape from the punishment of sin. No one but a coward would pray for that.

Nevertheless, God punishes no one. He is ever Love, whatever wrong we do. Sin brings its own punishment. "The wages of sin is death." What we need to be redeemed from is not the penalty of sin, but our liability or subservience to it; and that can be cured in only one way - through love.

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Whereas hatred tends to separate and to hurt and to disintegrate, love seeks to serve and to bless and to unify. Thus love - and love alone - is the remedy of sin. Jesus Christ was Love incarnate, and He "knew no sin."

So long as there is hatred or rancor in our heart toward any human being, just so long is it impossible for the love of God to flow into our soul and free us from our bondage to the arch delusion - evil.

In this passage of the Prayer, the little word "as" is important for us to consider, because it is absolutely true that with what measure we forgive, by that same measure are we forgiven.

As we loose the bonds of others, so will our own bonds drop from us. As we attempt to fill the emptiness of others, so will our own emptiness be overcome. We cannot be made one with the One until we are at one with the All;

and any hatred or rancor must necessarily divide us from Him whose whole Activity is Love.

"He will not behold the light," says Plotinus, "who attempts to ascend to a vision of the Supreme whilst he is drawn downward to those things that are an obstacle to the vision, for he does not ascend alone but brings with him that which separates him from the One, in a word, he is not made one."

It would be good practice, when we pray this Prayer, to pause and consider whether there is any soul with whom we are at variance. If so, let us remember that this dissension is an obstacle, and that our soul cannot ascend to the One until that obstacle is removed from our heart. Therefore let us cease our prayer; and, by an act of faith and love, let us be reconciled to our brother by letting go of our human judgment against him. Thus we may continue in prayer with a truer, happier sense of our Father's Love. For the measure that we mete out to others shall surely be measured to us again.

By an act of faith and love, practiced every day when we pray, with the purpose of drawing back into union those with whom we are at variance, even the most determined quarrels can be broken down. Then we shall find all bitterness dying out of our heart; and we shall also realize, in the light of God's Love and His Forgiveness, how small, how petty, our personal grievances are.

(To be continued)

ALPHABET OF
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day Of The Month

DECEMBER 1956

1. ABIDE under the shadow of the ALMIGHTY.

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3. (His angels) shall BEAR thee up in their hands.

4. I have made a COVENANT with My CHOSEN.

5. The Lord is our DEFENSE.

6. From EVERLASTING to EVERLASTING Thou art God.

7. With my mouth will I make known Thy FAITHFULNESS.

8. It is a GOOD thing to GIVE thanks unto the Lord.

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10. HOLINESS becometh Thine HOUSE, O Lord, forever.

11. The Spirit maketh INTERCESSION for us.

12. JUSTICE and JUDGMENT are the habitation of Thy Throne.

13. Let us KNEEL before the Lord our Maker.

14. Who among the sons of the mighty can be LIKENED unto the LORD?

15. MERCY shall be built up forever.

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17. Walk in NEWNESS of life.

18. Bring an OFFERING and come into His courts.

19. I go to PREPARE a PLACE for you.

20. Make (me) of QUICK understanding.

21. RETURN, ye children of men.

22. His truth SHALL be thy SHIELD.

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24. TRUTH shall go before thy face.

25. Show that the Lord is UPRIGHT.

26. Thy testimonies are VERY sure.

27. The WORK of our hands, establish Thou it.

28. The way YE know.

29. Where is thy ZEAL and strength.

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31. The Lord is my strength and song.

"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."

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