

UNITY

A WAY OF LIFE

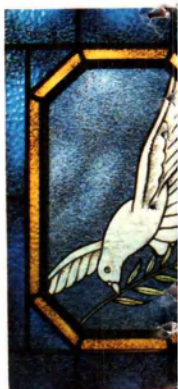
DECEMBER 1980



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A WAY OF LIFE

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VIEW FROM UNITY VILLAGE

This is our Christmas edition for 1980; and if it is Christmas, it must be time for another of James Dillet Freeman's memorable Yuletide articles. This year's story, which starts on page four, is wonderfully illustrated by Thomas Rosborough.

Freeman, director of Silent Unity, has now written twelve Christmas stories, all of which have been published in UNITY Magazine. The response to these pieces is always extremely warm, as it is for everything Freeman writes. Ten of his Christmas stories were compiled in 1978 in a Unity book entitled *Once Upon a Christmas*. It is a very popular book, attractively illustrated in full color by Evan Lattimer.

With few exceptions, the whole issue has been turned over to the Christmas theme. Also worth your attention are a fable entitled "Another Lamb of God" by Justine and John MacDougall Murray; an article by Beverly Lauderdale entitled "We'll Keep Our Christmas Merry Still"; "The Sign" by George (Bud) R. Hausmann; and the continuing Great Dramas of the Bible series with this installment entitled "The Christmas of Your Life," written by William Earle Cameron.

Supplementing these pieces are a variety of Christmas poetry, a reprint from an earlier issue by Charles Fillmore, and an entire column of Christmas-related questions and answers by Marcus Bach.

Because of space limitations it was necessary for us to delay the next segment of Winifred Wilkinson Hausmann's series "How to Live Life Victoriously." This life-changing series will return next month.

May each of you have a wonderful holiday season.

In God's love,

Thomas E. Witherspoon



FATHER CHRISTMAS

BY JAMES DILLET FREEMAN

WHEN THE KNOCK came at the door, I knew who was there. It was a knock I did not like. It was not a loud knock. No, no, it was completely proper. It was just that the hand struck the door in a way that demanded it to open.

I did not open it. I let the knocker knock again and yet again. It was Christmas morning. I knew that Christmas meant nothing to the knocker; but Christmas means much to me. I walked slowly to the door.

"Doctor," said Vishkin, "Anton!" and he walked quickly into the room. Vishkin was a way of pursuing out his name when he speaks your name

that I think he intends to suggest affection; but it suggests condescension.

Vishkin is not an unpleasant looking man, round-faced, blue-eyed, close-cropped hair, and he is always polite; yes, even his knock on the door. But there is something about the knock that suggests that I do not dare refuse to open the door. And there is the same thing about Vishkin. No hint of threat or brutality, no irregularities, everything precisely as it should be. Only Vishkin is a member of the Secret Police.

I do not know why we call them the Secret Police. The Secret Police have never been a secret. From the beginning



there has been no question as to what they are. It is obvious that the State believes it can achieve its aims more readily by letting us know who the Secret Police are. That we know does not lessen the fact that they are the Secret Police. No, no, it makes them even more so.

"Paul," I said, "Merry Christmas!"

"Ah, yes, so it is," Vishkin said. "You were busy, no doubt."

"Yes." I had not been busy. I lied—and I was angry at myself for lying. I am afraid of Vishkin—any sensible person is afraid of the Secret Police—but it angers me because I am.

"You had a patient? I did not see him leave."

Vishkin's eye had already probed the room and me to see if we might be hiding something. Not because he thought I might be, I am sure he didn't think that. It was just Vishkin.

"No patient," I said, "just busy."

"You were so slow in answering the door."

I shrugged.

Safer To Be Feared

Vishkin sat down in the most comfortable chair. I think Vishkin is aware that I do not like him because he is aware

that hardly anyone likes him. I think he and the whole apparatus of the Secret Police prefer it that way. They have read their Machiavelli that it is safer to be feared than loved.

"What can I do for you?" I said. "You are sick?"

"No, no, you keep me very healthy." Vishkin smiled. His smile does not make Vishkin more acceptable to me. When you smile, your entire face should be affected and there should remain a glow about you for a long time after your smile fades. Vishkin's smile merely draws his lips into a taut line and is gone as quickly as it appears, leaving no change in his expression.

"I just come as a friend," he said.

I distrust Vishkin's friendly visits. I have discovered that when the Secret Police visit you as a friend, it is to warn you of something you are doing that they do not approve of or to elicit your aid in something they are doing that you do not approve of.

I said nothing.

"We are friends, no?" he asked.

"Ah, yes, old friends, of course." I certainly prefer to have Vishkin consider himself my friend than my enemy. He is my patient, and once we had been dear friends. We had gone

through primary and high school together. We are even, in a way, family. His sister is married to my second cousin.

"Very old friends," he said.

"It may be you can help me."

I waited.

"There is a fugitive in the city."

"What has that to do with me?" I said.

"You are a doctor."

"He is ill?"

Vishkin smiled his thin smile. "He has been in prison. We have reason to think he may be looking for a doctor."

"Did you beat him?" I asked.

"We do not beat prisoners."

"He escaped?"

"No one escapes. But we try to be merciful. That is our weakness, you know." I hoped he did not hear my silent laughter. "We let him out."

"But you say he is a fugitive."

"He has taken advantage of our leniency. That's how it goes with these criminals."

"He is dangerous? He will harm me?"

"No, no. He's a teacher, a writer."

"What has he written? Have I read any of his writings?"

"I doubt it. He is a poet."

"A poet? Then there's no question. Poets are very dangerous. If just someone would read their poems. Have you read them?"

"I've glanced at a handful of his things. They are piffle."

"What are they about?"

Vishkin shrugged. "The usual piffle poets write about, I suppose. Love, peace, nature, people. He is very subversive."

"Yes, love, peace, nature—it sounds very subversive."

"Oh, he can fool you," said Vishkin. "He seems like a gentle fellow—loving everyone, affirming peace, always talking about the truth."

"The truth! That is dangerous."

Vishkin looked at me disapprovingly. "This is no joke. There are truths and there are truths. Do you know what he would have us believe? That each man has his own truth to be true to and he must find it in himself. That is chaos, Doctor, chaos. Nihilism. It ends with bombs! People read this stuff and write to him and get ideas. This man has been in touch with people all over the world—free thinkers, capitalist imperialists, religious fools."

"Isn't that what our foreign minister does?" I said, smiling.

Enemy of the State

"I say again," said Vishkin, rising angrily to his feet, "this is not a joking matter. He is an enemy of the State."

"He advocates its overthrow?"

"He is too clever for that. He goes about spreading this false truth of his, pretending to love everybody, preaching peace, preaching that it must begin with me, with you, with us. No wonder our enemies love him. The man is a criminal, a fugitive."

"What does he look like?" I said.

Vishkin reddened. "Here, I have a photograph. These criminals anger me so much I forget what I'm doing."

I looked at the photograph.

"His name is Kaleda," said Vishkin.

"Kaleda?" I said. "But that's an old, old name for Christmas. He's the ancient winter god, Grandpa Kaleda, Father Christmas, who goes about on Christmas Day leading a donkey, bringing gifts to children."

"Yes, so it is," said Vishkin. "His followers call him Father Christmas."

"Maybe he is," I said.

"Don't be foolish. But speaking of Father Christmas, are you planning another of those crazy expeditions of yours today?"

"Do you mean am I going to play Father Christmas for our neighborhood? Of course I am. Wouldn't you like to join me?"

He looked at me as if I had lost my mind.

"Come on, Paul, a Christmas

like the old ones! A day to be free! Free from all your stuffiness and hard-boiled police duties! You've got to get tired of them!"

"Don't be ridiculous," he said.

"Paul, Paul! Don't you remember? The happy times, the fun! You used to enjoy Christmas as much as I did! More than I did! That's why you liked to play the donkey! Remember how you liked to play the donkey? You said it made you feel so free! You could kick up your heels! You could bray, bray as loud as you wanted to! Come on, Paul, you and I, once more, let's make it a day for braying!"

For a moment I thought he might be going to. His lips twitched, his eyes had a distant look, soft lines formed on his face. I had a sense that a struggle was going on in him. Then the Secret Policeman took possession once more, but his voice was softer than before.

Father Christmas Custom

"Anton, dear Anton," he said, "I come here for your sake. I have powerful friends who do not look with favor on your persistence in these foolish frolics. You are making a spectacle of yourself! You, a doctor, an educated man, pro

moting these ancient superstitions."

If you who read this are a stranger to our country, you should know that it has always been our custom for young men—and sometimes old—to dress up as Father Christmas and go about with a donkey—someone dresses up as the donkey—knocking on doors, singing carols, making jokes, begging bits of food and wine, bringing little gifts and bonbons for children and anyone else who welcomes them. In some parts of the country it is Grandfather Frost or the Babushka who goes about; but they all play the same role, that is, they carry Christmas cheer. But the Party has frowned on these frolics, and many are afraid to continue them. I am afraid, but as a doctor, I see how much need of cheer there is. So I have not stopped.

"Paul, Paul," I said, "a few sprigs of holly, some off-key carols, some stale morsels of cake, a bit of marzipan, and a bearded old fellow leading a donkey laden with gifts—in this gloomy world, Christmas is like a crack in a dungeon wall. It lets in the light of the sun."

"Are you saying that life in this country is like living in a dungeon?"

"Of course I'm not saying that. But I who treat people's

bodies for their ills feel it is not outside my profession to treat their souls for their ills, too."

"Souls, pah!" said Vishkin.

"Souls, pah, perhaps. But as for ills of the soul, you who are responsible for law and order must be the last one to say pah to these."

Vishkin curled his lips. "There are the mentally disturbed, of course."

"Very well, make it ills of the mind then. Don't you think a little Christmas joy—yes, a touch of illusion, if that is what you prefer to call it—is a proper prescription?"

Vishkin threw up his hands. "If it were merely folklore, it might not be so bad. But all this Christmas nonsense, the whole pack of it, Father Christmas, Christ child, carols, Christmas trees, it nourishes a religion that, as Lenin says, is the opium of the people."

"Haven't the city fathers put up a Christmas tree seventy-five feet high in the city square?"

"Not a Christmas tree, you know that. That is a New Year's tree."

I laughed.

"Doctor, I can see you refuse to listen to reason."

"And you, Paul, you refuse to listen to your heart."

"When it tries to make a fool of me, yes. Anton, I have warned you. And if the man

Kaleda shows up, don't be foolish about that, too. Call me immediately."

"What shall I say when I call? Tell Vishkin, Kaleda, Father Christmas, is here?" I laughed again.

"Doctor, we are friends. Let's keep it that way. I assure you this is not a laughing matter."

"Kaleda Christmas, and Kaleda the man," I said, "they are both fugitives now, aren't they?"

"They are both dangerous to us all." Vishkin put on his hat and went to the door. He opened it, but paused in the doorway, peering back at me. "We are friends, Anton," he

said, "very old friends." The words had a kind of yearning in them. Then he drew the door shut, slowly, very slowly, as if he were reluctant to let it close between us.

I went to the window and watched as he went down the steps and disappeared down the street. I noticed there was a slight fog.

As I stood there, the miserable realization began to grow in my mind that I would do as Vishkin had ordered me to do. I would not play Father Christmas again. I was afraid.

Oh, I have always known I am not too brave—and the thought of the Secret Police and perhaps prison, they are



sound reasons for fear, I told myself. But the stark feeling that you are afraid—too afraid to do something you very much want to do, very much feel you ought to do—this is not a happy feeling. I stood there full of contempt for myself and anger at Vishkin.

Then a strange thing occurred. Almost in the spot where he had vanished, another figure appeared. I had an eerie sense of its forming in the space Vishkin had left vacant. What is more, I had an even stranger sense that this unknown person coming through the fog, whom Vishkin had just passed by without noticing—this was Kaleda, the fugitive he was seeking; and I knew he was coming to see me.

Don't ask me how I knew. How does anyone know such things? But we all know them. Intuitions are intuitions, that is all. I watched the man come up the street, pause for a moment at the foot of the steps leading to my door, and start up. I had the door open before he reached it.

"Come in, come in," I said, holding out my hand. "You are Kaleda." He nodded and took my hand in his. I gripped his hand with resolve. I had decided instantly that I was not going to call Vishkin.

I am a law-abiding citizen, grateful for the many blessings

that the State has brought us. But I am no friend of tyranny, whether it be the work of an insolent dictator or an insolent bureaucracy. And I had already decided that this man's crime was simply his insisting that he should be free to be himself—a belief I also had. I was not as brave about it, that is all. But somehow he was helping me to be braver. I was grateful for that.

There was nothing unusual in the man's appearance; you would certainly not have suspected that he was a fugitive. He was a man of ordinary size and build and he had a plain but very friendly face.

I Knew Him Well

I say very friendly because that is how he looked. I had an instant sense that he was my friend, in fact, someone I had known for years, someone I knew well, close and dear, an important part of my life. Yet I knew I had not seen him before.

"You strike me as someone very familiar," I said. "Do I know you?"

"Yes," he said, "you do."

"I don't recall where we have met."

He looked at me quietly for a moment with a strange and reassuring smile. Then he said, "You have met me ten thou-

sand times in ten thousand places and with ten thousand faces."

I am usually taken aback by people who make such statements. But, as I have said, this man drew me to him. His face showed that he had suffered, that he might be suffering now; but I felt that I was in the presence of a happy man, a truly happy man. And I like happy people; they can be counted on to help others to be happy. Perhaps it was his name, Father Christmas. I don't know. There was just something about him that made me feel good, very good, something about him that was like a warm coat on a wintry day.

"What can I do for you?" I said.

"I have a great deal to do," he said, "and I have suffered a great deal in this last year. Before I try to go on, I would like to be sure that I can. Many are depending on me. I need assurance from you, a doctor, as to what condition I am in. Can you examine me?"

I told him that my examination would have to be cursory, but I examined him.

His body bore marks that suggested he had been subjected to severe physical strains, perhaps even to torture; and there was little doubt that he had been starved. They

had been playing a disorienting cat-and-mouse game with him, shuttling him from prison to freedom to mental hospital to freedom to prison, but I could find little wrong with him.

Oh, there were, as I say, numerous signs of exhaustion, and I could not be sure about his heart; but when I finished, I told him I could see nothing urgent.

"Good," he said, and began pulling on his clothes. "I have many friends who are waiting for me."

"But you can't just go like this," I said. "You have many enemies who are waiting for you, too. For all I know, my friend Vishkin of the Secret Police is out there now waiting for us both. At least you must stay here for today. Today I have the perfect disguise for you. Father Christmas, you will be Father Christmas."

A Reason for Joy

Kaleda laughed, and when he laughed, I found myself laughing. One of the strangest things about Kaleda was the effect his laughter had. I feel that somehow his laughter was rising from something he knew about the nature of things—some fundamental and delightful truth he was in tune with that the rest of us have missed—a reason for joy that



had it on, again I had a strange feeling. I felt that here was not a man in a costume; here was Father Christmas.

I started to put on the donkey suit, but he stopped me. "You will be a clown," he said.

I started to protest, "But we have to have a donkey," but he began to laugh; and once more I found myself having to join in his laughter.

"There is someone else who wants to play the donkey," he said.

"Someone else? I know no one else."

"You will see," said Kaleda.

I found myself putting on the clown suit. There was a strong force about the man that made me do what he wanted me to do. Perhaps it was because once I had committed myself to helping him I felt I had better do what he felt was necessary.

"Don't forget the donkey suit," he said. So I gathered up the bags of trinkets and bonbons I had accumulated, flung the donkey suit across my shoulder, and we started out.

But we did not get far. As we reached the corner, suddenly, into the middle of the pavement, its arms outstretched to bar our way, a figure sprang before us. It was Vishkin.

Vishkin planted himself in front of Kaleda. "I warned you not to do this, Anton. Now you

exists at the very core of being. You could not hear Kaleda laugh and not join in his laughter.

And one thing certain. If any shreds of doubt and fear remained as to what my conduct should be, that laughter swept them away. Vishkin had ordered me not to play Father Christmas. Very well, I would not.

"Father Christmas, you will play Father Christmas," I said again. "Vishkin would never think of looking for you there. He expects it to be me."

Again Kaleda laughed. Again I found myself laughing.

"Yes, to play Father Christmas, I would like that," he said. "To hide something in the obvious place where you would expect to find it, that is the best hiding place of all. Let us be about it."

I got out the costumes. I helped him into his. When he

must pay the consequences, and so must this clown (he gestured toward me) you have induced to come with you."

I could see he thought I was Father Christmas. I was filled with alarm. I started to speak, but Kaleda threw up his arm. "How dare you speak to Father Christmas like this," he said.

The voice, I swear, was my own, only infinitely more commanding than I had ever made it.

"Don't play games with me, Doctor," said Vishkin. "I am in no mood for games."

"Not even on Christmas?" said Kaleda.

Christmas a Superstition?

"Christmas, pah! I warned you. We are determined to squash these superstitions and those who would perpetuate them."

"You dare to tell Father Christmas that Christmas is a superstition?"

Vishkin, I am sure, had expected Father Christmas—me, that is—to supinely submit to his orders. Now he stood confused.

"Doctor, you are playing with fire," he said, but his voice wavered.

"And you are playing with ice," said Kaleda. "Grandfather Frost is another of my

names. Beware!"

"It is you who had better beware! Father Christmas, Grandfather Frost, is it, Anton? And you in the clown's suit, who do you think you are, the Babushka? Or is one of you the Christ child?"

"The Christ child, ah, yes," said Kaleda, and now his voice grew soft. "He is what you are really seeking, isn't He, Paul?"

Vishkin leaned forward and brought his face close to Kaleda's. "You are drunk!"

"No, Paul," said Kaleda. "It is you who are drunk. You have imbibed too much Party propaganda. But you only half believe it, don't you?"

Vishkin let out an outraged roar.

But Kaleda kept on speaking, his voice growing softer and softer; and as he spoke, Vishkin's roar died away.

The Christmas Child

"You are drunk, yes, a little drunk. You had to have a drink to play the role you were playing. The Secret Policeman. Who really wants to be a Secret Policeman? You needed a drink for that. But you don't have to be the Secret Policeman here, Paul. It's Christmas, and you can forget him. You want to forget him. Yes, you do. You know you do. You want to be the Christmas child

you loved and still love in your heart. Here you can be that Christmas child."

A torrent of emotions was pouring across Vishkin's face. I was not sure what they were.

"Here you are with friends,"

Kaleda went on. "Friends. That's it, isn't it? You've come out to be with your friends.

You've come out to be with Father Christmas."

I expected Vishkin to explode at this, but he didn't. He stood still, amazingly still, as if something had hold of him.

Perhaps something did have hold of him, something in

Kaleda's voice. It had fallen almost to a whisper, and it was

brushing across my thoughts like a caress. So soft, so gentle,

so serene. It came wafting through my thoughts almost

as if it were my thoughts. Was it my thoughts? And is that

what it seemed to Vishkin, too?

"Remember, Paul, remember," said the voice. "That's it,

think back on all the fun we've had. You and I together so

many times! Oh, so many happy times! You liked to be

the donkey, remember? You could kick up your heels and

feel free. Remember how good it is to feel free?"

Suddenly Vishkin found his voice, but it was an uncertain

voice. "It is you who are playing the donkey. Both of you."

"Ah, but we don't want to

play it," said Kaleda. "Is that why you are angry, because you're not the donkey? Look, (he held up the donkey suit) the role is ready for you."

"I—I will show you who is—who is the donkey," said Vishkin; but his voice was hardly a sputter.

"You will. Of course you will," said Kaleda. "You will be the donkey to perfection. Oh, how you will kick up your heels! You will dance! You will sing! You will bray! How you will bray! What fun it will be to feel free," Kaleda began to laugh, "to feel free to bray!"

As I have tried to tell you, that laughter has a quality that is indescribable. It is contagious beyond imagining.

"You are under . . . you are under . . ." Vishkin said. I am sure he was trying to say "arrest." But suddenly a wide and foolish grin broke across his face and he began to laugh. He did not just laugh, he roared with laughter. He beat his chest with his hands. He doubled up and pounded his knees. He rolled on the pavement, choking and sputtering with laughter.

Vishkin Joins In

Then, just as suddenly, he stood up and, leaping into the air with a kick of his heels, let out a loud bray. It was an unbe-

lievable bray as it had been unbelievable laughter. If I had not known it came out of Vishkin, I would have sworn it was in truth a donkey.

Vishkin looked at me. He looked at Kaleda. Then still laughing, he took the donkey suit from Kaleda's hand and in a moment had it on. Again, he leaped into the air, kicking up his heels. Again he brayed.

The three of us started down the street together.

Incredible as it may seem, I cannot tell you too much about the rest of the day. It had to be the most extraordinary day of my life. But now everything that happened seems strained as through a haze. Perhaps that explains my inability to recall exact details. The day was so extraordinary that I have nothing to relate it to, and so it is beyond description. Sometimes I wonder if it really happened or if I only dreamed that it happened. But no, I do not believe that. The people we encountered were real enough.

There was the old, old lady, Rosa Spacek, who lived all alone in a dismal room in the next street. Have you ever seen loneliness? "Father Christmas, Father Christmas," she said to us. "Do you know what gift I would like?"

"You would like to die," said Kaleda.

It took me aback. It took her

aback too.

"Yes," she said, "yes, that is what I pray for every day. Can you give me that, Father Christmas?"

"No, Christmas brings life," he said. "But life will give you that; I assure you it will."

I do not know how, perhaps it was just that he understood her, but somehow Kaleda and Rosa Spacek established a bond that bridged her loneliness; and I watched the misery begin to ebb from her eyes.

"My friend here is a doctor," said Kaleda. "He will come to see you twice a week; he will keep you well."

I wanted to protest, but instead I nodded. "Yes," I said, "yes, I will."

"And my other friend, my donkey here"—he touched him and Vishkin capered braying around the room in such a ridiculous fashion that Rosa began to laugh—"he will visit you three times a week and bring you good news and good things to eat. It will be easy for him to do this because he has nothing else to do. He's a member of the Secret Police."

Kaleda winked at her and she began to laugh more loudly, I am sure, than she had in many years. To think of the Secret Police in the form of a donkey—that appeals to the funny bone in all of us.

Then there was the Manish-

ewitz family. I knew them all, all eight of them. They are my regular patients. They live in two crowded, dirty, trash-filled rooms.

Cleaning Time

"We are going to clean it all up," ordered Kaleda. And amazing to behold, they did, all eight of them, even the baby (at least she did nothing to add to the untidiness). There was such a brushing and scrubbing and sweeping and stacking away. And when the rooms were clean, the eight set about cleaning themselves and one another. In minutes we had the

eight of them, neat and shining, lined up in front of us. In minutes more, Kaleda had the lot of them scurrying back into drawers and boxes and under beds and behind doors, each one seeking something he could make or fashion or devise to give to one of the others. When we left, we were all—the eight of them and the three of us—singing.

I don't know how Kaleda knew just where we were needed, but he knew. As I told you, I had played Father Christmas for years, but it had always been a hit-and-miss affair. Sometimes I had received a hearty greeting—for the most



part, when I came to friends who knew how much I loved Christmas and had prepared for me. But more often, I had been received merely with the hope of getting a few trinkets. A few had even shut the door in my face, suspicious perhaps that the Secret Police had sent me out to see whether or not they still approved of what had been officially labeled bourgeois superstition.

But with Kaleda, we were welcome everywhere.

Perhaps it was the infectious nature of his smile, and even more of that mighty laugh. Perhaps it was the quality about him that, as I have said, made you think he was someone you knew and liked, had known and liked all your life.

Or was it something more?

Three times we came on homes where there was a sick child and where I, the doctor, was a Christmas gift indeed. Once I am certain the child would have died if I had not so fortunately arrived just then.

Five times we came on people in the midst of quarrels. When we left, they who had opened the door with a grimace bade us, "Merry Christmas," with a lilt that said they thought a merry Christmas it might turn out to be.

I cannot count the times we came on people who were lonely, who were poor, who

were depressed, and in some way—don't ask me how, but it happened—when we left, they were companioned, they had a sense of being well provided for, they felt cheered.

Perhaps I am exaggerating the effect we had. Perhaps you are thinking I was intoxicated with my own Christmas cheer; I admit I was carried away with my delight in what I was doing. If you have ever gone about with no other purpose than to scatter happiness, you know what I mean.

But one thing is certain, I went about that day with Father Christmas, and I saw him turning the ordinary into the extraordinary, touching things and people with a magic, the magic that Christmas is supposed to be, so that what would have been a gray, chill, winter day became a sparkle and exuberance, a never-to-be-forgotten joy.

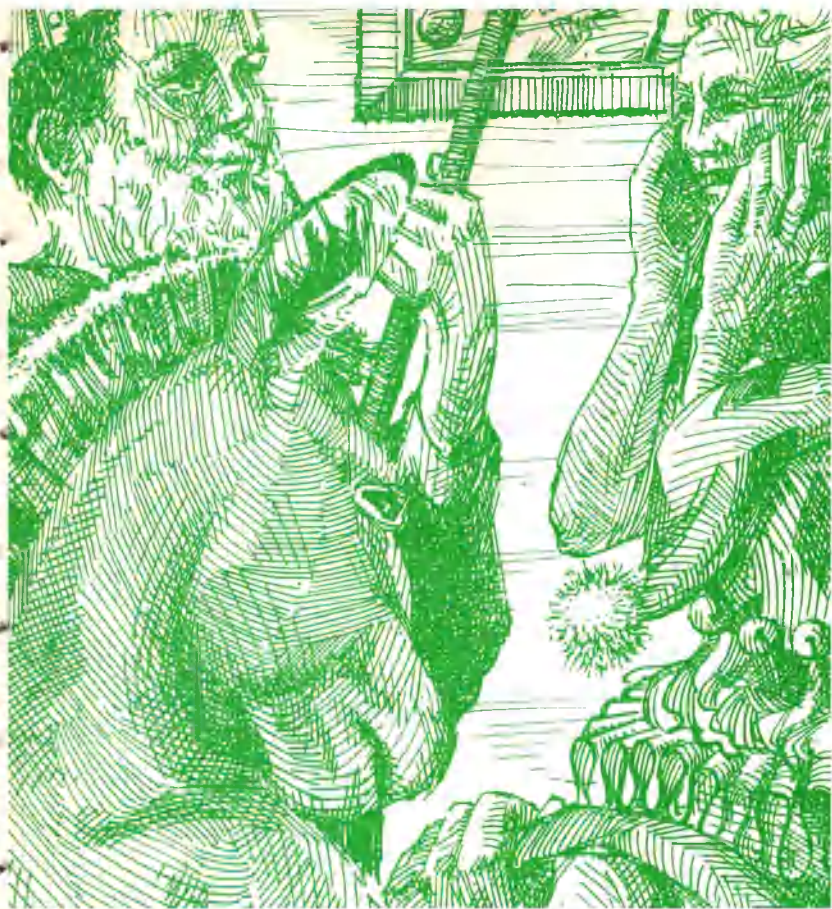
It was dark when we got home. We were tired. We flung ourselves down and almost immediately were asleep.

When I awoke, Kaleda was already fully dressed. Vishkin was still asleep on my sofa.

"I am going," said Kaleda.

I remonstrated with him. "No, no, you must stay."

"It would only endanger you—and myself." He pointed toward Vishkin. "When he wakes, I must be gone."



"Where are you going?"

"I have friends, many friends. I will be safe."

I shook my head. "They will throw you back into prison."

"Perhaps. It has not mattered. It does not matter."

"Can I give you money, clothes, food?"

"Thank you," he said, "but Christmas is over."

"Thank you," I said. "It is a Christmas I will never forget—or understand." I looked at Vishkin.

"You are wondering," said

Kaleda, "how I got him to play the donkey. It is because he wanted to. Oh, not Vishkin of the Secret Police, but Vishkin, the Christmas child. That child is buried deep in his heart, but it is there. It will always be there. Sometimes the deeper the truth is buried, the easier it is to get it to burst forth. Rest assured, you cannot make anyone do what he doesn't, in some part of him, want to do."

Vishkin let out a loud snore.

"One thing more," said Kaleda, "he has already forgotten

last night. You will see. But in a moment he will wake, and I must not be here or we will both be in prison." He went to the door.

"Good-bye," I said.

"No, not good-bye," he said. "Until we meet again."

My face must have revealed doubt.

"Remember, I told you, we have met ten thousand times already and we will meet ten thousand times again."

I stood at the window and watched him go down the street; and, as I half expected, I watched him disappear at the same spot where I had seen him emerge the day before.

But as he reached it, he turned and waved; and I am sure I heard him laugh, for I began to laugh—not aloud but down deep. My living fibers were laughing; my organs, my tissues, my heart, my mind, my whole being were rocking in a silent and uproarious delight. And I knew that I was laughing because I had come close to the meaning of things and would henceforth always be more aware that whatever might seem on the surface, at the center, it was joy.

When I turned around, Vishkin had waked and was sitting hunched over, his head in his hands, staring at me. "Where am I?" he said. "How did I get here?"

"You have been sleeping—here, on my sofa, all night."

He shook his head in disbelief.

"All night! What time is it?"

I looked at my watch. "Seven of the morning after Christmas."

"Have I been sick?"

"Do you feel sick?" I asked.

"No." He looked at me embarrassedly. "Have I been drunk?"

I shrugged. "Were you drinking?"

"A couple of vodkas, perhaps. But I can't remember a thing since I saw you yesterday morning."

I felt a great sense of relief. "Perhaps you had a little too much Christmas spirit!"

"Me? You are joking."

We both laughed.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "I feel unusually good. A little light-headed, but good. You must have taken good care of me."

"I did my best," I said.

"You are a good friend," he said. "Well, whatever I did, it must have been good for me. I feel more lighthearted than I have in years. I just hope I didn't make a donkey of myself."

"Sometimes we all do that," I said.

"True, true. But thank you, Doctor, for lending me your sofa and your good care. Ah, it

is good to have friends!"

"Very good," I said.

I was glad when at last he left. I sat and thought for a long time, puzzling over the whole affair. Who was Kaleda and what had happened to us? What had he done to Vishkin to make him such a donkey? And to me to make me think I saw the things I saw? Had Vishkin and I both been drunk and was I remembering things that had never happened while he remembered nothing?

Could it be that Kaleda was a hypnotist, a powerful hypnotist? Such a person might make Vishkin think he was a donkey, I suppose, and might make me think I saw all the things I saw. I laughed to myself. Perhaps neither of

these feats would be too hard.

As you may imagine, I found myself considering some impossible notions. Could Kaleda be Father Christmas? Truly Father Christmas? Could he be? Haven't you found yourself asking the same question?

But I rejected this thought at once. I am a reasonable man, a doctor. I look for reasonable explanations. Father Christmas is a legend. You know that and I know that.

A month passed before I saw Vishkin again. We met on the street. We talked of this and that. Finally, I found enough courage to ask him, "That fellow Kaleda, did you ever catch him?"

"Of course we caught him. They never elude us for long."

"I wondered what had happened to him," I said.

He peered at me intently. "He got what all enemies of the State get. But I'm glad you spoke of him. There is another fugitive you can keep an eye out for."

"And who is this one?"

"Oh, a very similar type. Very similar."

"And his name?"

"Paskhá, I believe."

"Paskhá! That is Easter."

"Easter! Yes, so it is. I'd almost forgotten there was such a day." Vishkin laughed. "His followers call him Brother Easter."



James Dillet Freeman, author of "Father Christmas" and many other Christmas stories which appear each December in UNITY Magazine, likes to decorate for the holidays, too. His home, shared with his lovely wife Billie, is always festive at Christmastime.

NOURISHING THE LIFE FORCE

BY RICHARD AND MARY-ALICE JAFOLLA

God expresses in the body temple as the life force which knows and seeks only health and wholeness. The thoughts we think and the foods we eat nourish that life force and affect the chemistry of the body temple. "When the chemistry of the body and the dynamics of the mind are united, a third element is brought forth, and man feels that, 'in Christ he is a new creature.'" (Charles Fillmore)

This series of articles is meant to serve as one means of working with the life force. If you have been searching for the answer to a health challenge, perhaps these ideas may launch your rebirth.

Underweight Is Unnecessary

"... Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." It takes more than food to nourish a living human being.

There are many people who are proof of this statement. They eat what they consider to be a substantial amount of food each day and yet they remain underweight. Why?

To understand the situation, we first must realize that the mere act of putting food into

the stomach does not, of itself, constitute nourishment. Eating does not mean we are actually fed. The truth of the matter is that we are only fed, or nourished, when the nutrients have actually gotten into the cells. Between the swallowing of food and its delivery to the cells, an entire world of chemical processes transpires. Persons who are underweight are undernourished. For some reason or other the nutrients are not getting into the cells.

where they can be utilized in building the body.

Soul Gains

But we said there is more to nourishing a person than just food. The soul requires nourishment as much as the body does. Spiritual nourishment is craved by every soul if it is to grow. And just as with the body's nourishment, that of the soul must also be supplied regularly.

Underweight is an indication of lack of wholeness. It is physical health that is less than perfect. It means that the divine blueprint has not been totally followed. Thus it becomes a perfect opportunity to work with the God-given spiritual and physical laws that will lead us directly to that perfect design if we are willing to make the effort.

And what is this effort? It means putting God first in *all* things. This is a phrase we are apt to toss off lightly, agreeing with it intellectually but not taking it deeply into our hearts. God first! It has to be. The entire order of the universe is built on this principle.

If we separate ourselves from God, we lose communion with Him. This is not His fault; it is ours. God is still on the line, so to speak. It is we who have hung up the receiver!

The best way to make contact with God is through daily meditation. It is here that we obtain our spiritual sustenance. Meditation and prayer are the green pastures where our souls are restored and where we can spiritually feed. When we have this daily communion with the Creator of the universe, we begin to feel the flow of life as it permeates our bodies. We are strengthened, calmed, and nurtured by this life force within us.

During our times of meditation, we can envision the life force in the cells as it is at work turning essential nutrients into divine human tissue. We can direct our attention to the processes of digestion and assimilation, blessing these phenomenal functions and encouraging them to do their best.

The mind must be cleared of all negative elements that might be impeding the flow of nutrients to the cells. Search your consciousness over and over for traces of hindering thoughts and emotions. Dig them out and cast them away. You have no need of them. Make room for the good.

As the soul is able to fill more freely with the spirit of Christ, it experiences a sense of satiety. It feels nourished. This opens the way for the life force to better do its work of constructing the body temple. It

becomes easier for the tissues to be strengthened and for new, healthy tissues to be clothed about the body. It is a movement toward wholeness.

The first step in gaining desirable weight, then, is gaining communion with God. Our goal is to have sound muscle tissue added to our frame, not fatty tissue. High-quality tissue is the objective. And high-quality soul development is where it all begins.

Food: Divine Substance

We must start to think of food in a new way. Rather than being entertainment and titillation to the taste buds, food must be regarded primarily as divine substance provided by the source of all substance for the regeneration and construction of the body temple. That is why blessing our food—saying grace—before we eat it is a good idea. It helps to center our attention on the main purpose for eating: nourishing the life force within our cells.

Food regarded in such a manner—seen as divine appropriation for the physical body, which is none other than the expression of the Creator Himself—becomes a sacrament. Eating takes on religious or spiritual significance, as important as our prayers and af-

firmations. The life force within us becomes convinced of our desire to help it. It feels appreciated. These are all things we should think about in reference to eating.

Foods to Gain By

Then we come to the question of what to eat to help the body gain weight. There are definite guidelines for this—scientifically determined but nevertheless divinely ordained. As Myrtle Fillmore, cofounder of Unity, would remind us, "We must know the chemistry of the body; we must find the whole man. We have need of this outer man and we have to make the mortar that builds him up to a full development."

Without sound principles by which to select our foods, eating becomes a hit-or-miss affair. If we are trying to gain some weight, we often try stuffing ourselves with "fattening" foods, merely to discover that the only gain might be a small bulge at the beltline. This is fat—not healthy muscle tissue. To gain solid tissue that enhances the body temple—both aesthetically and healthfully—we must learn the rules of good nutrition and make every effort to obey them.

Solid tissue is built of protein, so it is naturally to pro-

tein that we look first. We must remember that protein and *only* protein forms the basis for the weight improvement we are seeking. This is the kind of weight that will be distributed exactly where it should be and will be permanent.

Our protein foods are eggs, milk and milk products, cheeses (including cottage cheese), meat, fish, and poultry. These are the finest proteins, and each meal should be based on one of these life-building foods. Breakfast in particular must be scrutinized to make certain it is rich in protein.

(If you do not eat any foods from an animal source, you will have to scientifically combine your foods to provide the best amino acid balance. This is very tricky, so be careful.) The importance of the ingestion of top-grade protein cannot be stressed too strongly.

Each meal should also include a form of carbohydrate. Instead of the sugar, white flour, candy, cakes, alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, pastries, and the myriads of junk foods people ingest in their attempts to put on weight, eat some *constructive* carbohydrates that will provide the proper fuel for the body. These carbohydrates are the *only* ones that the life force

requires: fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, and whole grains (including whole grain breads and baked goods). Honey, blackstrap molasses, or pure maple syrup should be used if you wish to sweeten anything.

The life force requires one more type of food, and that is essential fatty acids. We know them as oils. One or two teaspoonsful or more daily of a good, cold-pressed, unpreserved oil can be beneficial. If you can use wheat germ oil as part of your daily quota, so much the better. (If you don't like the taste of wheat germ oil, it can be put into a blended protein drink or taken in capsule form.) The popular vegetable oils, such as safflower, corn, sunflower, sesame, and soy can be used on salads, baked potatoes and other vegetables, toast, and in soups and blender drinks. Remember to refrigerate these unpreserved oils after opening them.

Three Secrets

One of the secrets of gaining healthful pounds is the eating of at least three complete meals every day. Each meal should contain at least protein and carbohydrates. It is important not to skip a meal or skimp on meals. All of the nutrients must be supplied if they are ever to get into the

tissues.

Another secret of attaining more weight is the use of a nourishing protein drink *in addition* to your regular meals. This can be made in advance and carried with you to be sipped *between* meals and even before bed, if you feel hungry. There are many recipes for such a good-tasting, nourishing drink. Here is a basic one you can alter to suit your own taste. We call it the Body Builder.

Blend the following:

- 8 ounces of milk or juice
- 1 tablespoonful protein powder (milk and egg type is best)
- 1 raw egg
- 1 teaspoonful wheat germ oil (or any other good oil)
- 1 banana
- 1 teaspoonful of honey (or any of the other acceptable sweeteners)
- 1 tablespoonful of granular lecithin

This delicious drink will make one serving. Multiply the amounts to fit your eating pattern. There are numerous ways in which you can change the flavor of this drink. Peaches, strawberries, apples, or any other fruits can be substituted for the banana. Carob powder can be used as chocolate flavoring. A little experimentation will reveal the almost limitless

taste nuances you can devise. Since the drink should be used every day, it will always be appealing to you because its flavor (and texture) can be changed whenever you wish.

Another suggestion for between-meal "meals" is raw, unsalted nuts and seeds. They not only are excellent sources of trace minerals but they are also rich in essential oils. They are good tasting, too!

The third nutritional secret of gaining weight is the use of digestive enzymes. Often we do not derive the maximum nutritive value from our foods because we are not breaking them down properly. Our bodies may lack adequate amounts of digestive enzymes. We are eating the right foods in the right amounts but they are not doing us the good they should. In other words, the freighter was loaded but somehow the goods never reached port—the food was eaten but the nutrients never reached the cells. And we must keep in mind that we are not really nourished until the cells receive the raw materials required for sustaining and building life.

Digestive enzymes, taken as a supplement after each meal, can help our body temples to get the most benefit out of our food. Taking a multiple enzyme tablet containing pancreatic and other enzymes can there-

fore be a wise practice. (If you have a stomach ulcer it may be wise to consult your physician before choosing an enzyme.)

Total Nutrition

In addition to the three nutritional secrets to healthful weight gain, there are some basic supplements we should consider. Are you taking a high-potency, multiple vitamin formula? Are you taking, in addition, a complete B complex that contains all eleven of the B vitamins? Are you getting enough vitamin C? (Many researchers are advising 1,000 to 5,000 milligrams daily). What about minerals? Extra calcium or a multiple mineral complex is always helpful.

The life force really needs *all*

Prayer

Prayer is an action of mind and emotion by which we can and do change our own consciousness. By doing so, we bring ourselves into harmony with our ever-increasing understanding of God as the one Presence and one Power that is now, always has been, and always will be the Source of all that we can desire.—*Robert P. Sisking.*

of the nutrients—all of the vitamins and minerals—to create more life within us. There are certain things it does *not* want, however, and we should avoid these cell-assassins as if our lives depended upon it. (They do!)

Things like caffeine, narcotics, tobacco, and alcohol do not belong in the body temple. These substances tear us down, destroying nutrients and weakening the life of our cells. They inhibit the building of solid muscle tissue and tend to hold the weight below its natural level.

Meditation can be used to help overcome these villains. See and regard yourself as a *non-smoker* or *non-drinker*. Make contact with your Christ Self, be in awe of the power it possesses, and lovingly try to provide that Christ Spirit with the best home you can give it. We come into obedience to God's physical laws through obedience to His spiritual laws. Myrtle Fillmore was always aware of the need for obedience to the laws of both realms, the spiritual and the physical. "There is also a physical side to the operation of this divine law. The body and its needs must have our consideration. We must not drive the body or neglect its normal needs."

Mrs. Fillmore has introduced another important aspect here.

If we want to gain weight (and thereby gain health), we must not push the body too much. We need to get the proper rest and sleep during each twenty-four-hour period. This gives the body a chance to "catch up." It gives the nerves a rest and helps to keep us from burning up nutrients unnecessarily. Develop regular and adequate sleep patterns along with several "rest breaks" whenever possible during the day if you want your body to function at its best.

This doesn't mean that we should not exercise, however. Proper sleep and rest are health "musts," but so is regular physical exercise. The proper exercise can improve circulation, the means by which the nutrients are delivered to the individual cells. It also tends to have a calming, stabilizing effect upon the body, which is certainly to be desired. In addition, exercise keeps the muscles toned and firm, after their true design.

We must not ignore physical exercise. Choose the type with which you are most comfortable and do it regularly. Walking, cycling, swimming, yoga—these are all excellent examples. Whatever type you select must be done enthusiastically but not to the point of exhaustion. Do add exercise to your weight-gaining regime. It

is a great body equalizer.

It might be wise to point out that some people who consider themselves to be underweight are not underweight at all. A slender body is healthier than a plump one. The astounding thing about the body is this: once good health is attained, your "normal" weight is automatically attained as well.

If you are among those who feel the need to improve their health and thus increase their weight, trying to achieve this may not have been easy for you up to now. But with the suggestions presented here, you might discover the answer. We can always count on the wisdom of the life force to help regenerate our bodies once we have done our share. If we have begun to change our consciousness, lifting it to attunement with the perfect blueprint of our Christ Selves, and if we have begun practicing the principles of good nutrition and exercise, we can expect to attain the proper weight. The life force is aware of what that proper weight is and will bring us to it if we will give it the opportunity to do so.

Let us concentrate on providing the divine sculptor with the finest materials. When we do so, we can rest assured that He will fashion a body so fine that every cell of it will sing His praises.

PRAYER POWER

Excerpts from letters to Silent Unity, quoted with permission of the writers.

Relief from Pain

Dear Unity Friends: I called concerning my sister's eye. She had had surgery and was in terrific pain.

The call, as always, was received by a person with a calm, reassuring voice. Within a very short time my sister was resting and has never had the pain since.

Thank God and you, dear Unity, for being there. Please accept this small contribution to your good work. — *M.W., Florida.*

Speech Regained

Dear Silent Unity: Your prayers for my father were answered in a most miraculous way! I wrote you to join me in prayer for the recuperation of my father who had an aneurysm of the throat which left him without speech. His doctor told him there was not much hope that he would ever regain his speech and that the situation was inoperable.

I have wonderful news. He regained his ability to speak and I know it was through your prayer

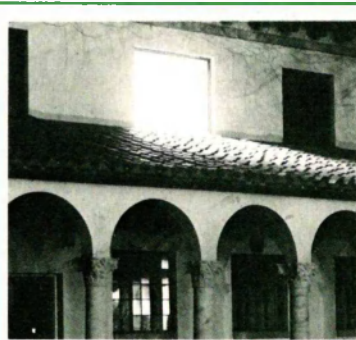
assistance that this was possible. How can I thank you enough for your continued prayers? Thank you so much. — *S.L.K., Florida.*

Prosperity Plus

Dear Silent Unity: My prayers along with the generous help of your prayers were answered.

I needed \$340 and asked for that specific amount. I believe I called you on Tuesday with my request, and by Friday the money had come—\$340.86. I tithed 10% of that amount to Unity. An additional \$375 arrived shortly thereafter. You will find my check for \$37.50 enclosed.

God bless you. The Lord's generosity knows no bounds. — *F.T., California.*



THE LIGHTED WINDOW AT SILENT UNITY

To call for prayer help, phone (816) 251-2100. (If you have an urgent need and have no means of paying for a call, dial our toll-free number: 800-821-2935.)

Another Lamb of God

THE PROPHEPIC WIND whispering out of Galilee that night billowed the curtains of Herod's palace in Samaria; then it went gusting over the rooftops of Arimathea and Jerusalem in search of the narrow streets of Bethlehem. It eddied the dust on the doorsills and ran into the hills surrounding the City of David, where the shepherds' cooking fires still flickered in their circles of stone.

Their coarse coats draped about them like tents, the sons of Shelemiah—Malluch, Amos, Jeriah, and Lemuel—crouched in silence around one of the small fires. They sat on their heels to share the warm cover with their naked legs and sandled feet, for the wind out of Galilee swirling through the darkness was unseasonably cold.

Malluch, the eldest, lifted his bearded face to the night sky. "It grows late," he said. "Take the first watch, Lemuel."

The others nodded, relieved it was not their turn.

"I will take the whole watch, brother. My ewe, little Hannah, should lamb this night. She is so small it may be hard for her."

Malluch shook his head. "I don't like it. She is between times. There could be trouble with a new lamb in this season."

Beardless Lemuel, a boy of fifteen summers, the youngest of the four, made an agonized gesture, casting for something to defend Hannah's out-of-season lambing. "She cannot help being late, Malluch," he said protectingly. "I know her time is near now. All day she kept to herself on a warm rock in the sun."

"Well, see to her then," Malluch waved him away. "There's no need to take the whole watch. Call Amos when you tire. Amos will wake Jeriah for his turn. I will take the last watch."

They settled beside the fire to sleep, drawing their coats about them, while Lemuel quietly turned and went down

the hill toward the flock bedded amongst the rocks and scrub.

"You Are Not Alone"

He went first to the flat rock where Hannah lay sheltered by a small mulberry tree. She hadn't moved since he last saw her. Kneeling, he murmured, "I am here, little Hannah. You are not alone."

She raised her head as his practiced fingers palpated her soft middle for contractions. There were no signs yet. He patted her gently. "I won't be far," he promised.

As the young shepherd sat upon a stone above the ewe to begin his vigil, he looked around at the bedded flock clustered on the rocky hillside and thought how vastly empty the world seemed in the lonesome darkness. Yet, through

God's daily miracle, by the time the cock crowed there would be olive trees, oak trees, and mats of tough, determined grass between the stones where his father's flock grazed. There would be caravans moving on the roads below, while other shepherds like themselves kept their watch on the far hills.

While thinking on these things he gradually became aware of a growing light beyond the hill where the City of David lay. He was still studying it wonderingly when Hannah's distressed cries sent him scrambling down to her.

"There, there, Hannah," he consoled her. "Lemuel will stay with you."

He sat upon the earth beside her, drawing his coat about him to ward off the chill, wishing he did not feel these things so deeply. If he could



just be matter-of-fact like Malluch or Amos.

The Growing Light

Lifting his eyes to the horizon again he watched the growing light until he thought the whole city must be in flames. He should go and tell Malluch.

Reassuringly he caressed Hannah's head as he got to his knees and picked up his staff. "Peace, little ewe. I leave you with God a moment. Something comes to pass in the City of David. I must tell my brother."

It was only a short distance to the wavering gleam where their cooking fire smoldered. Malluch was sleeping flat on his back, one arm flung out as though he had fallen there.

Lemuel bent over him. "Malluch!" he whispered. "Malluch!"

Malluch's unseeing eyes flicked open and closed. He moved his lips with silent petulance, then opened his eyes abruptly and sat up. "You were to call Amos, not me!"

"Look, Malluch!" Lemuel pointed to the sky. "The City of David is burning!"

Malluch looked and leaped to his feet. "Amos! Jeriah!" He ran forward as if for a better view. "Truly it must be a huge fire! Huge! All the heavens are

alight! I have never seen any such thing."

Amos, heavy with sleep, stared, bewildered. "What could burn with such flame? There are no buildings of wood."

Jeriah, fully awake, was thinking more clearly. "You forget the stables with their straw and hay."

Malluch turned from the sight, disturbed. "Fear fills me. It is in my bones."

He Remembers Hannah

They were all silent for a moment, steeped in the excitement, until Lemuel suddenly cried, "I forgot Hannah!" He reached for his staff with an anxious gesture. "I must go back to her. She is all alone."

Malluch sighed deeply. "All this preoccupation with a lambing sheep . . ."

Jeriah, who stood facing in the direction of the lighted sky, shouted in alarm, "Malluch! What is happening?"

The blaze of light had drawn to a point—a single candle flame in the heavens—creating a star so magnificent it was as if all the stars in the firmament were molded into one. The shepherds knew something of deep import was about to manifest. The intense stillness of the hills was well-known to them, but not the throbbing

mystery of this night. Their accustomed surroundings sustained a hush that could almost be heard.

With keen perception alerting him, Amos raised an arm. "Listen, everyone! In the distance . . ."

Malluch, Jeriah, and Lemuel stood motionless, mentally leaning into the night. Being shepherds had long ago trained them to interpret the slightest sound. But this was unlike anything they had ever heard on their Judean hillside. It resembled the mellow chanting of many voices.

And then it was all around them—a glorious burst of music. They remained transfixed, scarcely daring to breathe.

Whereupon the voice of an angel spoke to them out of the singing, stilling the music, filling their ears like a tempest. Lemuel fell to his knees, while Amos threw himself down on the ground as if struck by lightning.

And the angel said to them, *"Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall come to all people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."*

Malluch and Jeriah sank down as though their legs were melting beneath them. A Savior? Wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger? A Savior in a manger!

Before they could comprehend this incredible utterance the presence was gone, and the singing of the heavenly host gradually blended into the night wind. Finally there was only the tinkle of a bell down where the flock slept.

Malluch, regaining his composure, spoke with a tremulous huskiness in his voice. "We go at once."

Amos and Jeriah prepared to leave without hesitation, but Lemuel made no move.

"I will stay here," he said. "Hannah needs me and someone must watch the flock."

"You will go!" Malluch said emphatically. "This journey is a command from God. He will keep the watch."

Lemuel's eyes filled with tears. "I feel He bids me stay, Brother."

For a brief moment Malluch thought how such opposition would ordinarily anger him. But Lemuel's protest was not defiance. He was filled with concern and worry for the ewe. The boy had much to learn.

"Stay then," Malluch said at last. "Only know such bidding comes from your own heart. We were told to greet this

promised Savior. 'Tis a sad thing you allow one silly sheep to keep you from it. May God forgive you."

Lemuel stared at the ground, crestfallen.

Malluch took up his staff. "We go now," he said quietly.

As Lemuel watched his brothers disappear into the night, a hidden anguish welled up in him. "I wanted to go, God," he whispered aloud, voicing his thoughts. "I wanted to go."

But his regret was short-lived. Another distressed cry from the ewe shook him out of his sorrow abruptly. Seizing his staff he hurried to her. So small, like a half-grown lamb she was. It would be a difficult delivery. But Lemuel felt he knew what to do, for he had watched his father work with the ewes many times.

He knelt down beside her. "Your little one comes soon," he murmured to her. "Do not tremble so. I am here. Lemuel is here."

His hands were gentle and deft as he worked to relieve Hannah's pain, yet through it all he was vaguely aware of another hand guiding his. While her travail seemed very long to him, his help served to quicken the birth far more than he knew. With miraculous swiftness it was over, and Hannah was tenderly licking her

newborn.

Lemuel leaned back, resting on his heels in relief and exhaustion. "Thank You, God," he breathed.

Scent of Danger

Now that the ewe's moaning cries were stilled, every sound on the hillside was magnified. The night wind rustled the foliage of the oaks and olives, then searched out the hollows, making the flock complain of the chill. As they clustered and reclustered, a snapping twig and a scent of danger started them bleating with fright.

On a knoll above them stood a lion, massive and foreboding against the night sky. Lemuel leaped up, startled, dragging a slingshot from his belt. The lion looked down at the boy standing beside Hannah and her newborn. With resolution he came off the knoll at a trot, the scent of the birth in his nostrils.

Lemuel, harking to some inner voice, dropped the slingshot and daringly stretched his limbs as tall as he could. Emulating Malluch's authoritative way, he spoke in clear, commanding tones.

"Salaam!" he said, lifting one hand in a sign of good will. "Peace be unto you, lion! This is not a night for killing. Not for you, nor for me. Something



wonderful has come to pass in the City of David. A Savior has been born. Your Savior and mine. You must not harm my sheep this night. Go in peace!"

The lion, still approaching, stopped a few cubits from Hannah and her lamb, obviously surprised by the human voice. Head down, tail lashing slowly to and fro, he appeared to be pondering what to do.

The predicament sent a shiver through Lemuel that started at the back of his legs and swept over him in a wave of panic. He compelled himself to repeat the significant words again, "Peace, Lion! Peace!"

As though in answer to the command, the shaggy beast began to turn in semicircles, first one way, then another, until he

was lying in a circular position, tawny head between front paws.

Lemuel, hardly daring to trust what he saw, kept saying over and over in his heart, "Help me, God! Help me!" The lion lifted his head, sniffing in the direction of Hannah's lamb and edged slightly closer without getting up. Again the boy and the lion eyed each other in a strange communion. It was a very long moment. Lemuel could clearly see the lion's face, but somehow the expected ferocity was not there.

The Lion Leaves

Finally, as if remembering something he had to do, the lion rose to his feet, stretched

indolently, and moved toward the knoll again. At the top he hesitated for a single backward glance, then turned and disappeared into the hills.

The sheep were churning and bleating, completely unnerved by the lion's visit. Lemuel went into their midst to calm them, still feeling shaken himself from his encounter. When he returned, he found Hannah's little one shivering with cold. Poor thing, he thought. It should have a bed of hay to snuggle into. But where could he find hay or even enough tall grass amidst these rocks? He sighed with regret. Then, with sudden compassion, he stripped off his coat to tuck it around the tiny creature.

Wearily Lemuel climbed back to the stone he had first occupied above Hannah and sat down. He felt chilled to the bone without the coat and attempted to evoke warmth from thoughts of his mother's large cooking fires, remembering also the tantalizing odors that lingered about them.

The musing helped diffuse the cold yet brought upon him an unwanted drowsiness. He fought it for several minutes, floating in and out of conscious awareness. *A shepherd cannot sleep on watch*, he chided himself, forcing his eyes to stay open; but something inside him slipped away, and the

hillside vanished into an abyss of darkness.

The glow of many lanterns spilled a warm light through the open stable door. Lemuel found himself standing in the outer courtyard surrounded by the clanging of camel bells and the muttering of cameleers as caravans prepared to move out with the first sign of dawn. In spite of the noisy confusion, he thought he could still hear that celestial music far away, as if coming from the center of the great star.

Three shepherds standing silently in the shadows at one side of the doorway moved cautiously into the light. Lemuel caught his breath with surprise and rushed forward, calling their names out joyfully. They did not seem to hear. He tugged at Malluch's sleeve, but Malluch paid him no heed. Even Jeriah, always warmly responsive, gazed through him as if he were not there.

A Sense of Urgency

A loneliness came over him. What had he done that they should ignore him? He was in Bethlehem looking through the open stable door the same as they. Yet how did he come to be here? He didn't know and could only follow a sense of

urgency that pressed him on.

Through that door was the manger where they had been instructed to go. With resolution he walked across the threshold. Someone was kneeling there as if before an altar—a large man, richly garbed. Two others, equally resplendent, stood behind him, bearing gifts.

Lemuel eased himself around the kneeling king and peered into the manger. There was, just as they had been told, a newborn baby wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a crib filled with sweet-smelling hay. He looked wonderingly at the delicate girl sitting beside the manger. She smiled at him.

Reaching a finger toward the sleeping child's hand, he touched it tenderly. In vagrant slumber the infant grasped the proffered finger and held it for a moment. Joy flooded Lemuel. *The babe feels my touch and the mother sees me.* His loneliness melted.

"What have you named him?" he asked softly.

"He is called Jesus," Mary answered.

As she spoke the name, a tall figure, clothed in immaculate white, appeared beside the child. With trembling wonder Lemuel beheld the features of One whose beauty and radiance outshone even the great star above the stable. The

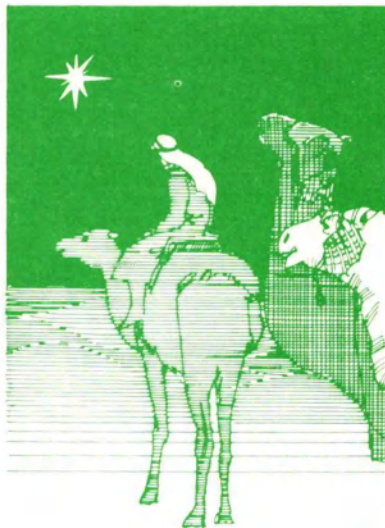
boundless love and mercy shining in the eyes of this transcendent Presence was utterly beyond his understanding. Lemuel found he could not gaze into those eyes for long. It was like staring into the sun. Tears began to stream down his cheeks. He buried his face in his hands.

Early morning mists had pearly the hillside with light. Lemuel, slowly becoming conscious, looked up into the troubled countenance of Mal-luch whose staff was nudging his side.

"Where is your coat? Do you wish to die of the cold?"

"What kind of shepherd sleeps on watch, little brother?" Jeriah asked teasingly.

Lemuel thrust himself to his feet with his staff. "Why would



you not speak to me at the stable?"

"You talk nonsense," Malluch said. "Are you well?"

With words tumbling over each other Lemuel told of the events of the night before—Hannah's difficult birthing, the incident of the lion, and the Bethlehem visit.

He Is Not Believed

"The lambing ewe and the prowling lion would have kept any shepherd watchful for hours," said Amos, his practical nature disturbed by Lemuel's unbelievable account. "You had no time for a journey to the City of David, foolish brother."

"You dreamed," said Jeriah.

Lemuel shook his head, looking at the three of them watching him, their faces shadowed by doubt and concern. "Why do you not believe me, brothers? I tell you truly I was not dreaming. I was myself—as real as I am this moment!"

Jeriah was about to speak again, but Malluch held up a hand for silence. "Where were we when you spoke to us, Lemuel?"

"At the right of the stable door."

"And you also saw three kings?"

Lemuel nodded. "In splendid robes."

Amos and Jeriah exchanged a quick glance. Malluch pursed his lips. "There were no kings, Lemuel. Not one."

"But I saw them!"

"No, little brother. Malluch is right," Jeriah said gently. "There were only other shepherds like ourselves."

"Well, then," Lemuel said, "they will be there soon. You will see." His voice quivered with hurt at their disbelief.

"How could you see these kings, Lemuel, if they had not yet come?" protested Amos. "You talk in riddles, boy."

Again Malluch lifted a hand to restore calm. "You say you spoke to the mother?"

"Yes," said Lemuel. "I asked the name of her child."

"And what did she tell you?"

"She said, 'He is called Jesus.'"

"That part may be true, Malluch," Jeriah broke in. "I heard another shepherd say . . ."

"Never mind what is true and what is not true," Malluch said sharply. "There is more to this than we shall ever know." His voice became low-keyed again. "And the tall figure in white, Lemuel? Who was he? Another king?"

"More than a king."

"An angel?"

"More than an angel . . . much more."

Malluch stared at the distant hills, lost in thought for a mo-

ment, then he brushed a tired hand across his eyes. "Where is this new lamb?"

The Gift of a Coat

Eagerly Lemuel led his brothers to the secluded place beneath the mulberry where Hannah still lay with her little one.

"If our mother could see your coat," Malluch exclaimed, "she would have your skin tanning on the rocks!"

"But I had no hay for the

lamb's bed, Malluch, and the little thing was shivering to death."

"Enough! Enough!" Malluch said a bit gruffly, sweeping away explanations. "Let us have a look at your lamb."

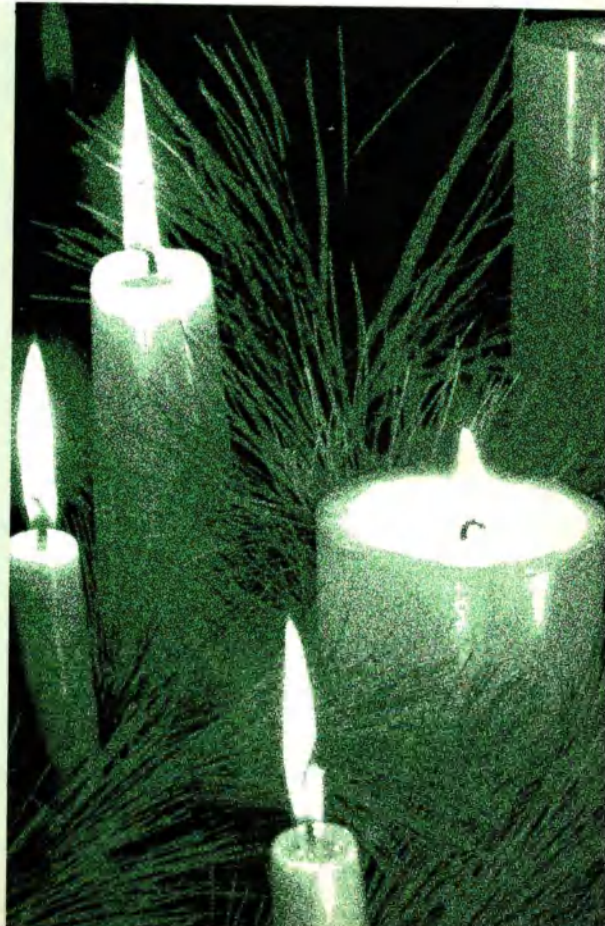
Lemuel knelt down and carefully removed the coat he had so lovingly tucked around Hannah's newborn—but he drew back quickly in stunned bewilderment.

The lamb lay curled in a deep bed of hay . . . like the fragrant hay in the manger. (U)

Christmas Eve

By Elizabeth Searle Lamb

In the dim-lit church
how it glows now,
in candlelight
and pine fragrance
and soft-sung carols—
the star that hangs
above the crèche—
and in the crèche
figures of Mary
and the Holy Babe
and Joseph enfolded
in the warm breath
of oxen and burros;
and without, shepherds
bring their flocks
and the three kings
draw near with gifts
to celebrate once more
this holy mystery.



We'll Keep Our Christmas Merry Still

BY BEVERLY LAUDERDALE

AND SUDDENLY, THERE would be no Christmas this year. The last child had married and gone overseas. Angel hair and candy canes seemed foreign against the stuccoed walls of our new apartment. And staying within the four rooms to hear radio stations play carols or to watch family gatherings glorified in television stories would only serve to dramatize our aloneness. So my husband Bob suggested we spend the day along Northern California's rugged coastline.

Early on Christmas Day, we put a suitcase in the car. The banging trunk lid, the burst of the engine were alien noises on such a silent morning. While Bob backed our car from the parking stall, I worked at blotting out memories of other years when kids dashed in pajamaed forms to retrieve gilded boxes from beneath the tree, and I tried ignoring the picture of that recurring scene unfolding in homes we passed.

As we swung onto the freeway approach, I allowed myself one drop of self-indulgence. Christmas should be the scent

of pine permeating the house, the taste of sugar cookies, the treasured family crèche in its familiar spot on the mantle, popping fireplace flames engulfing the Yule log, and the texture of smoothly wrapped presents held for a suspenseful moment before removing the ribbon—not a ride to the ocean.

Upon reaching San Francisco, we headed toward the marina and found The Green alive with people. "Kindred souls," I muttered as we parked the car; but while crossing the lawn I discovered loneliness, routed by activity, had sought another home. Several kites struggled for altitude, joggers traced the area's perimeter, dogs pranced and barked. A holiday atmosphere, a spirit of enjoyment, a sense of people being where they chose to be radiated from the varied ages.

Traveling north across the Golden Gate Bridge, we noticed walkers smiling in the broken sunlight, lazy bicyclists staring at the bay. They too failed to match my image of morose individuals. Maybe, I

thought, I've been guilty of limited vision, certain that the only way to spend Christmas was with the conventional tree-gift-large-dinner concept. Had I been locked into believing mine was the "right" way to celebrate the day?

We stopped at the beach. Children scampered from the surge of waves; dogs woofed at advancing foam; hamburgers sizzled on camp stoves; lovers strolled on fine, damp sand; from parked vans, CB radios

squawked with enthusiastic voices—diverse Christmases.

As my husband and I prowled the area hunting shells and gnarled wood, I found a sand dollar. Honed by wave action, it nestled in my palm, a perfect gift. A line of salt coated my lips. The ocean's roar and the immensity of gray-green expanse blotted out petty concerns, presenting instead a Christmas pageant, more real perhaps than the structured tableaux I had



staged.

For lunch we ate at a seaside restaurant—each table full of diners munching shrimp and prawns, abalone, or scallops. Boisterous and animated, individuals happy in the moment, they occasionally studied the Pacific from picture windows while chattering with a camaraderie reminiscent of ski lodges.

Through late afternoon the car snaked its way along the highway. We paused often searching for driftwood, listening to guitar music, watching backpackers readjust their gear, hearing beneath it all a reaffirmation of life.

Near the town of Ft. Bragg, winter darkness descended. After locating a motel we

toured the quiet streets, and any residue of self-pity vanished in the night air, replaced by the day's myriad sights and ideas.

We lingered over dinner in a restaurant, more tranquil than the luncheon cafe. In the serenity of this place a gentle warmth prevailed—a warmth reflected in my husband's face. I considered the vignettes of the last few hours identifying a theme of happiness threading its way weblike through the assorted persons we had seen.

Walking toward the motel with keen ocean air biting through our jackets and dark heavens displaying stars not visible in our suburban sky, I experienced a relaxing glow. When had I felt so calm, so whole on a Christmas night? Usually exhausted by company and baking, aware the house—riddled with torn papers and broken toys—must be faced in the morning, I had craved only sleep. Now alone beside Bob, my hand tucked into his, I *knew* Christmas; for if it truly symbolizes giving, then today I had received abundance—engraved remembrances of coastal beauty, and more important, gifts of peace and spiritual growth which, in contrast to most purchased presents, would not only survive the coming year but would enhance it.

Unity Churches, Centers, and Teachers

If you would like to know the location of your nearest Unity church or center, and cannot find it listed in your telephone directory, please write to The Association of Unity Churches, Unity Village, Mo. 64065. They will be glad to give you any desired information about Unity churches or classes in your vicinity.



... with answers by
MARCUS BACH

- **THE IDEA** To answer readers' questions about anything related to increased spiritual understanding and deeper integrative growth. To discover not only what people are asking but what people are thinking about in the area of beliefs and practices in the world within and without. To help others—and us—in the spiritual search. To stimulate the search itself.

Question: *Christmas brings this question to mind: Do other religions celebrate the equivalent of Christmas—the birthday of their founder?*

Gus C.

Answer: They do, but by no means to the degree that Chris-

tians observe the birth of Jesus. To name a few: Islam takes note of the birth of Mohammed with special services. His birthday, reckoned on the basis of the Arabic calendar, varies about ten days year-by-year. Last year it was observed on January 30, this coming year it will be January 19. Many Buddhist groups observe the birthday of their founder, Gautama Buddha, on April 8. Lesser-known groups also pay tribute to their founders as is the case with the Swedenborgians who honor Emmanuel Swedenborg on January 29, and the Self-Realization Fellowship which pays tribute to Yogananda on his birthday January 5.

MB

Question: *Why the name "Jesus" instead of Immanuel? Was Jesus Christ the first to have this name and if so, how did it come about? I know that His name was to be Immanuel according to the prophet Isaiah, but the angel told Mary it should be "Jesus."*

A.L.P.

Answer: In the days of Joseph and Mary, Jesus, the Greek equivalent of the Jewish Yeshua or Joshua, was a very common name. You are quite

right, our English Bibles tell us that at the annunciation, "Jesus" was the designation. The Christ child was given this name at the ceremony of circumcision on the eighth day after birth. The name "Jesus" also applies to Immanuel and Savior and is used interchangeably.

"Jesus" developed into Jesus Christ or Jesus the Christ when His special divinity became apparent. This "Messiahship" officially began after His anointing by John the Baptist. At this time, Jesus was thirty years old and, according to the Gospels, a voice from heaven proclaimed, "*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.*" We may assume that this baptism of water involved the baptism of the Holy Spirit, equipping Jesus for the ministry, miracles, and life-changing experiences which, even today, have transforming effects upon people throughout the world, particularly at Christmas.

MB

Question: *This may be more of a sharing than a question, but other mothers may be interested. Without going into details, my son, age nine, deserved a severe reprimand following a Christmas party*

in our home at which he offended some of his younger guests. After I got through with the discipline, he sat brooding in the midst of his presents. I felt sorry and penitent and asked him what he was thinking about. He looked up at me and said, "Did Jesus' mother ever scold him?" This broke me up.

M.W.M.

Answer: We could stretch a point and suggest that Mary reprimanded Jesus when she accosted Him by saying, in effect, "Where in the world have you been? We've been looking everywhere for you." But this as a reprimand depends upon the way she said it. Jesus, in turn, responded, "Don't you know I must be about my Father's business?" And we have no idea how He said *that*.

There is, however, a fresco in the Cathedral of Lucca in Italy which shows Mary whipping Jesus with a stick, while He is begging St. Ann to intercede. There is also an interesting allusion to this Mother-Son relationship in an old Ballad "The Holy Well."

"As it fell out on a May morning

And on a bright and holy-day,
Sweet Jesus asked His
mother dear

If He could go out to play.

"To play, to play, sweet Jesus
shall go,
And to play now get you
gone,
And let me hear of no
complaint
Tonight when you come
home!"

Thank your son for an interesting question and you for the sharing.

MB

Question: *When and why did Father Christmas become Santa Claus?*

Eloise G.

Answer: When Christianity christianized the observance of the winter solstice (known both as Saturnalia and Brumalia), which was a pre-Christian nature festival, it was natural that the "Sun of the Heavens" which had long been worshiped should give way to the worship of the Son of God. From the beginning of the celebration of the birth of Jesus, Father Christmas was a mythological figure personalizing the generosity that people felt at the joyful time when winter waned and days grew steadily longer.

It came to pass that in the 4th century A.D., there lived a bishop named Nicholas who was both rich and generous.

This has always been a happy combination—to be both holy and rich—and even in those days in the coast town of Lycia in Asia Minor people began calling Nicholas "Good old Saint Nic." As time went by, he was even credited with gifts that came from other sources besides his own and soon miracles were also ascribed to him. Obviously, he became associated with the Christmas spirit, and his fame spread throughout the world. He was canonized as the patron saint of boys. Today some still call him Saint Nic (or Nick) and others Saint Nicholas, but Santa Claus was the name that stuck. In some countries, Switzerland in particular, Father Christmas still roams the snow-clad villages and rides his sleigh in the skies with his faithful wife St. Lucy, patron saint of girls, at his side.

MB

Question: *Who wrote "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer"?*

J.J.H.

Answer: John D. (Johnny) Marks, songwriter and composer of so many songs, recipient of so many awards, gentleman of so many skills and distinctions in the field of popular

Christmas music that he deserves to be—as he is—president of the St. Nicholas Music Company, just as Rudolph rightly deserves his high and happy niche in the Songwriters' Hall of Fame.

MB

Question: Where did the idea of the Twelve Days of Christmas originate and are the days important as far as Christmas itself is concerned?

Alyce

Answer: Since the very beginning of Christmas, festivals were instituted which required more time than was allowed by Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. It was felt that additional days were needed to do justice to the magnitude of the event. Also, from the beginning it was noted that the Wise Men, traveling from ancient Persia, reached Bethlehem some twelve days after the miraculous birth, and this twelfth day deserved recognition. Gradually the twelve days from December 25 to January 6 became traditional. January 6 was designated as Epiphany (manifestation), the day of the Magi, observed mostly in Eastern Catholic churches.

It has been suggested that these twelve days were con-

nected with the twelve apostles, but this is hardly the case even though certain apostles are honored on certain of these days. So are saints and religious dignitaries, depending upon the ecclesiastical calendars of the various Christian denominations.

The so-called "secular world" honors the days from Christmas to Epiphany with the enchanting English carol that fantasizes about the gifts a true lover should give to his true love on each of the twelve days. To refresh our minds, here is the gift sequence if we really want to go all the way:

On the first day of Christmas: A partridge in a pear tree.

On the second day of Christmas: Two turtle doves.

On the third day of Christmas: Three French hens.

On the fourth day of Christmas: Four calling birds.

On the fifth day of Christmas: Five golden rings.

On the sixth day of Christmas: Six geese a-laying.

On the seventh day of Christmas: Seven swans a-swimming.

On the eighth day of Christmas: Eight maids a-milking.

On the ninth day of Christmas: Nine ladies dancing.

On the tenth day of Christmas: Ten lords a-leaping.

On the eleventh day of Christmas: Eleven pipers piping.

On the twelfth day of Christmas: Twelve drummers drumming.

While I am all for confining the giving of gifts to the mystical night of the 24th and the magical day of December 25th, the Twelve Days do offer a romantic challenge. Merry Christmas to all!

MB

Question: *Was gold as precious in the days of the Magi as it is today?*

E.T.

Answer: What the "gold fixing price" was in the days of the Wise Men is anyone's guess. But gold has always been one of nature's most precious metals; and that is an undisputed historic fact. Its high monetary value was because of its luster, its indestructibility, malleability, rarity, and its mysterious properties, so mysterious that today it challenges atomic scientists, as it challenged alchemists of old, to transmute base metals into this "metal of the gods."

Since its discovery in Egypt 6,000 years ago, gold has been bartered in grams (1 gram = 0.03527 ounces), in grains (1 grain = 0.0648 grams), in pennyweight (24 grains), in ounces (1 ounce = 20 pwt), and so on throughout all history.

December 1980

Pure gold is referred to as 24-karat; 12-karat is fifty percent gold. The precious stuff is so workable that a single gram of gold has been spun and drawn into an infinitesimally thin wire *two miles long*.

Charles Fillmore, in interpreting the Magi's gifts into spiritual terms, said that gold refers to *a consciousness of the omnipotent richness of infinite substance*. Frankincense means *the transmutation of material consciousness to the spiritual*. Myrrh is *an emblem of Resurrection, an ointment of love*. So whatever the price of gold may have been at that first Christmas or at this time of year, let's remember it has a metaphysical as well as a physical value no matter what your broker may have to say.

MB

Question: *Does any other religion besides Christianity claim a virgin birth?*

Mrs. H.P.

Answer: Virgin births, miraculous births, and births during which special signs appeared in the heavens are common in the history of religions. In the majority of religions, stories of this kind are accepted as being legendary, mythological, or symbolic. The uniqueness about the virgin birth of Jesus

is that Christianity generally accepts the event "for real" and feels it has good reason for doing so. The prophetic forecasts in the Old Testament, the Gospel accounts, the determination of people to believe in the virgin birth, are in themselves ample proof of its validity as far as most church authorities are concerned.

In his unique book, "The Story of Christian Origins," author Martin A. Larson goes so far as to say that without claims for a virgin birth no prophet or savior-god could ever have been accorded status of "divine incarnation." "This," he writes, "was so common among ancient religions that it was impossible for any religious founder to achieve acceptance without it. In the mystery cults, in Zoroastrianism, in Buddhism, all saviors, past, present, and future, were gods incarnate, born of human virgins. Jesus was accorded the honor by universal demand after His followers began making converts in the pagan world."

But even an observation as sweeping as this cannot rule out the fact that as far as Christianity is concerned, the general consensus is that the virgin birth of Jesus was something more than legend, myth, or symbol. It was the fulfillment of the Old Testa-

mental promise: *Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.* (A.V.) To many Christians, Christmas is the miracle and the proof that He was, indeed, the Promised One.

MB

Question: *Should I give a Christmas present to someone who doesn't like me even though I like him?*

Kathy

Answer: In the true spirit of Christmas, get him something you know he really likes, attach a pretty card, and sign it: Anonymous. Then see what happens.

MB

Question: *Why is it that at Christmastime, a happy time of the year, I get unhappy and depressed? Does this ever happen to you?*

Ms. C.C.

Answer: If it does happen to me, I would never call it unhappiness or depression because *what we establish in mind is established in mood.* I would rather say that I get *reflective*, because there is no other period of the year when we feel emotions as deeply and take as

thoughtful a look at life as at Christmastime. The fact that all this comes close to the end of another calendar year is also part of the story.

And sometimes we get physically tired. Even Santa Claus, when I last talked with him, told me he gets tired; and I have never known a Salvation Army worker or a mom or dad who didn't feel the wear and tear of the holiday season. At the same time, I have never met a child who was not filled with joy at the sight or sound or touch or smell of something having to do with the Christmastide. So, come along, let's count our blessings and realize that Christmas is the grand paradox of merriment and sober-mindedness, sharing and caring, looking forward and backward over our lives, reviewing the past, projecting the future, enjoying the activity of things, and also taking time for the need of special quietude.

The paradox is as involved and exciting as the clash of carols and commercials. Or the sight of a weary, gift-laden shopper and the glimpse of someone on a park bench thoughtfully strumming "Silent Night" on a guitar.

The paradox is universal. I remember a Christmas in the Holy Land where the point and counterpoint of the paradox

was unmistakably evident: outer joy and inner longing, peace and unrest, singing and silence, worship and concern. Despite these facts, or because of them, there was something about Christmas in the homeland of Jesus Christ's birth that persuaded me to better understand life as it really is—a paradox—in which, to a very marked degree, the choice is always ours.

Come to Bethlehem of the spirit as a pilgrim, asking nothing, wanting nothing, seeking nothing but the Holy Land within yourself, and you will surely find it. You will discover that you are a stronger person than you think, that you have a greater potential than you realize, and that you are eventually more benefited than depleted by your challenges. Christmas in its paradoxical way helps us find ourselves and gives us a star to steer by.

My best approach to Christmas is to think of it in terms of both the "Spirit of Christmas" and the "Christmas spirit." I see them as two interrelated expressions of this traditional holiday season. The Spirit of Christmas is the consciousness of something essentially spiritual related to one's inner life, the sense of a realizable inner peace and love, as if our highest ideals are clearly

within reach.

The Christmas spirit, on the other hand, is the holiday merry-go-round, a cacophony of merchandizing, mesmerizing, and fantasizing, marking the annual countdown from the first Advent Sunday straight through to the mystical hush of Christmas Eve. All the hoopla is part of the legitimized celebration of this once-a-year spectacular—the Christmas vacation. Unfortunately, it is often carried to extremes.

The paradox of the Spirit of Christmas and the Christmas spirit is becoming more and more self-evident. We are looking at what may seem like a contradiction, but Spirit and spirit are interwoven, comple-

mentary, each energizing the other.

It is only as we stay close to the Spirit of Christmas that we can keep our cool, so to say, in the midst of the explosive outpouring of the Christmas spirit. And when we do, the paradox works its magic and helps us rediscover what has been called the Christ within and the presence of Christ throughout the globe, no matter what the shape of things may be. For a little while, at Christmas, God's in His heaven and all's right with the world and once more there is born anew the perennial dream of *Peace on Earth, good will to men*.

MB

From the Writings of Charles Fillmore

Christ's Birth and Reign in Man

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATES the greatest event that ever took place on Earth—the raising of the natural person to a superperson.

The Lord of this planet and all the archangels, His assistants, shouted for joy when one out of the millions who had

peopled the Earth achieved the great ideal—Christ consciousness.

The human family is the product of untold ages of growth. Cycle after cycle, races have come and gone and left hardly a mark of their existence. We find here and there in caves and buried sands a few utensils or hieroglyphics—all that is left, from an earthly viewpoint, of some important civilization.

Why have these great races of the past died and been forgotten? Because they failed to raise the human standard high enough to produce one real person. They may have been like John the Baptist: . . . *Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.* (A.V.) But they failed to produce one person of the Christ pattern, great in the kingdom of the heavens.

We Are Free Agents

God is not satisfied to make persons like machines, to be driven at His will. God's people are like Him, free agents having access to all that exists in His spiritual kingdom. Millions of seed persons are planted in the garden of God, the human body; they grow in their freedom and forget their source and die. The husk perishes, but the germ is saved and planted again and again. The ever-present Spirit hovers over these human plants, ever holding before them the image and likeness of the perfect person. And when one person out of the millions who have walked the Earth breaks down the ambitions of mortality and attains eternal life, all the hosts of heaven shout: "Glory to God in the highest."

Jesus told Nicodemus that

he must be born anew "of water and the Spirit." Here is a wonderful and mysterious prophecy, one that has never been fully understood by any person except Jesus, because no other person—so far as our records show—has demonstrated divinity. However, many persons are on the way to accomplishing that which Jesus accomplished—the bringing forth in human consciousness of God's idea of humanity.

We may assume that we are God's idea, and such an assumption will help us to the attainment; but we must prove our assumption. The one goal of human achievement is to bring forth God's person; that is, to bring forth our ideals of ourselves. We all have high ideals; we all see that there are possibilities in us that we have not developed. In other words, infinite Mind is constantly holding before us all that we need to fulfill our ideals.

Jesus is not the only person of whom the Jehovah mind said, *This is my beloved Son.* . . . That same mind is saying to you in your higher consciousness, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.* Are you following this beloved Son, the God ideal? If so, you have begun the new birth; you have started in your mind a process which, through mental and

spiritual coordination of your mind with the mind of God, will culminate in the resurrection of the image and likeness of God that was implanted in you in the beginning.

Christ Idea Eternal

We should understand clearly that the image-and-likeness person existed before Jesus was born. People of the religious world have been sadly confused concerning the character of Jesus. They have identified Jesus with the Christ and thereby failed to understand the Scriptures. As related in Matthew, Jesus set the Jews straight on this point when He said to them,

What think ye of the Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

*The Lord said unto my Lord,
Sit thou on my right hand,
Till I make thine enemies thy
footstool?*

*If David then call him Lord,
how is he his son?*

The same explanation of the existence of the Christ before Jesus was born is given in the Gospels of Mark and Luke.

We thus see that Jesus plainly taught that the messianic principle which He brought forth existed before

the personality Jesus came in to manifestation.

Christ the "only begotten Son" of God is God's idea of Himself. All persons are candidates for the high office, the Son of God manifest. *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus* is not limited to any race or any condition. Jesus demonstrated these facts. The most humble circumstances attended His birth, yet He demonstrated the Christ principle by believing in the supremacy of the spiritual mind within and without Himself. Such demonstration is possible to every person; its accomplishment consists of understanding and adjusting the thoughts of the mind to the law through which the demonstration is brought about.

Our first experiences in the new birth point the way to another "country," or another state of consciousness. In the symbology of the Old Testament, Abraham and Jacob were told to go to another country. Similarly in your ideals, you begin spiritually to perceive that you need to expand your thoughts, and through faith, you see a new world all about you—not in the heavens far away, but in the spiritual ethers omnipresent. The world of Spirit all about you is a realm in which your mind takes

a deeper hold in ways that you cannot explain. You begin to believe in what you cannot prove with the senses; you believe in your ideals, in yourself, in the Christ within you. This is faith—the outstanding characteristic of Abraham. As your faith grows in the things invisible, they become tangible; they become as tangible to your mind as material things are to sight and to touch. What seemed to the sense consciousness merely a faraway ideal, a daydream of hope, through faith takes on reality. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* The world of the senses is unreal because it is changeable, uncertain, unreliable. Thoughts that we have today may change tomorrow and give us a new manifestation in the ever-changing outer world of forms.

Causes Need to be Known

In the new birth, we study motives when we want to know the causes lying back of acts. Mind is the moving power back of every act, and when you familiarize yourself with right ways of thinking, you can solve the problems of your life and show others how to solve their problems through the Christ.

The followers of Jesus have held many different opinions

concerning the character of Christ. Jesus said to let the dead *bury their own dead*. This we interpret to mean that we are to follow Him in the realization that life is continuous, that it is here now, that we can, through the consciousness of the Christ within, enter into eternal life, overcoming death of the body as Jesus overcame it. Overcoming death of the body is the consummation of the new birth.

Today we are destroying the thing that we do not want in our world. We find in metaphysics that denial of a thing dissipates it and sends it out of our consciousness, and that affirmation will bring a thing into expression. We must use our inner spiritual judgment as we never used it before. We must be reverent. Reverence brings us into unity with the realm of rich ideas. We must have faith; we must have zeal; we must have power; we must have all the qualities that Jesus had, in the same degree that He had them. Let us not be afraid that we are sacrilegious in following Jesus literally in all His accomplishments. He said that we should do the things that He did, and greater things; that we should follow Him; that we should overcome as He overcame; that we should be like Him. These are mighty admonitions. Their fulfillment is

easy if only we believe them and stick to our faith. *In your patience possess ye your souls.* When the Christ consciousness is born in your soul, you will know the true meaning of Christmas. This birth is not a matter of outward observation, and you may not know just when it takes place in yourself.

When we perceive the truth, the harmony is not a place but a condition of consciousness, the soul begins to purify itself.

Pray for the perfect. Meditate upon the pure. Affirm the fearless, and secretly dwell in the place of the Most High. In imagination see yourself as a prince of God. *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

(Bible quotes in this article are from the King James version.)

Monthly Thoughts

ILLUMINATION—Through meditation, we open the soul to Spirit and receive its baptism. There descends into consciousness a quickening power of light, wisdom, and understanding. A unity between the Son and the Father is established.

The light of Christ magnified within me guides my thinking and illumines my path.

HEALING—The mind is the seat of perception and sensation on which depends all consciousness of the things we see, hear, and

feel. We fill our minds with thoughts of joy, love, health, and strength, and these thoughts weave in and out through cells and nerves into one harmonious whole.

The Christ life magnified within me radiates throughout my entire being as health and wholeness.

PROSPERITY—The spiritual Self lives under a law in which God, the universal support, will supply us through the power of the Word. We therefore speak words of Truth, continually praising this wonderful power within that fulfills our every need.

The power of Christ magnified within me is my assurance of success and all-sufficient supply.

Great Dramas of the Bible

BY WILLIAM EARLE CAMERON

The Christmas of Your Life

THE CHRISTMAS ANTHOLOGY is probably the greatest gathering of traditions, customs, and stories of any event in human history. It draws together thousands of years of history and harmoniously integrates the customs, the folklore, the hopes, the longings, the spiritual aspirations, and the religious beliefs of many people from many nations. It is the one thing so far that has truly brought the East and the West together.

When you think about it, much of the Christmas story and its traditions are make-believe. It started with the factual birth of Jesus Christ; but, along with this nativity story, we now find a charming blend of Santa Claus, Christmas trees, mistletoe, candy canes, Yule logs, Scrooge, and even "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." They are all as much a part of Christmas as the original story; and, even if none of it

were an actual fact, all of it is true spiritually. It is a story that truly belongs to all humankind. The greatest dimension is reached when we realize that Christmas is really our story—the drama of the birth of Christ in us.

I would like, therefore, to reach back through the anthol-



ogy into the Bible, to focus on the essentials and bring them together so that we each can experience the Christmas of our lives. We usually think of the Christmas story as beginning with the story of the birth of Jesus, but actually it began in the Bible approximately 600 years before His birth, with the prophecy of Isaiah: *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. . .*

Two Descriptions

The only description we have then about the actual birth of Jesus are the few lines found in two of the Gospels—Matthew and Luke. These Gospel stories were written down long enough after the life of Jesus, perhaps thirty years, so that each is different. The book of Matthew was written mainly to the Jews to convince them that Jesus, whom they had rejected, had actually been their long-awaited Messiah. It was framed in references to their promised Davidic Messiah, the King of the Jews, connected with important Jewish personages from the past and with

the grandeur of palaces and kings and priests. It reminded the Jews that even Wise Men outside of Jerusalem and the Jewish religion had recognized Jesus as the Messiah and had traveled far distances to honor His birth.

The Gospel of Mark was written mostly for the Romans. A Roman wouldn't have been the least bit interested in the birth of a Jewish baby or impressed by that kind of promise of power and glory, so it was never mentioned.

Luke gives an entirely different glimpse of the story of Jesus. Luke was a gentile, a gentle Hellenistic Greek physician. He was a humanist. He thought of the little things. He talked about the humble setting of a manger and shepherds and animals. And then he talked about an angel: *And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.*

Then, Luke took the story into a wonderful dimension. Matthew had traced the genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham to show that all Jews were related to this Messiah. Luke took the genealogy straight back to Adam and Eve, showing that Jesus was related to everyone.

Luke took the story out of the exclusiveness of one people or one religion and gave it a worldwide setting with a universal meaning. *"Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"*

The book of John, so unlike the other three that it is not considered a synoptic gospel, is truly a metaphysical (spiritual) book; and it gives us the third great meaning of the Christmas story—the real meaning, the fullest meaning, the meaning that our well-intentioned religious leaders have diverted from us with astounding success throughout the ages—"the mystery hid for ages."

We all tend to believe of course that Christ was born in a manger 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem. But actually, we read about the original birth of Christ in Genesis: *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he*

him; male and female he created them. The image of God—the spirit of God in us—is Christ. Jesus Christ lived it out completely. But Christ is in every person. Jesus Himself said that. He once said. *"... before Abraham was, I am."* That doesn't sound grammatically correct, but it is. Before Abraham was I AM. I AM is the name of the universal God, the Spirit of God in all men that Jesus represented. I AM, the ancient name of Christ—the true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world—the spiritual image and likeness in which we were all created, our own true Self or, as the Apostle Paul said, *"... Christ in you, the hope of glory."*

So, in the account of Matthew, we have the historical setting of Jesus, born Christ 2,000 years ago. In Luke, we have the universal idea in which Jesus Christ became the central personage of our evolution Christward. Jesus, the Way-Shower, the Guide, the Elder Brother, the Example, the Savior of all mankind.

Once Jesus said, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father."* The greatest tribute we can pay to Jesus is to acknowledge

the Christ Spirit in ourselves. His mission was to introduce each of us to God's indwelling Spirit, the Father within each of us.

A Third Meaning

It is the book of John that gives us this third, individual meaning, that Christ lives in us, personally; and this book brings the Christmas story right into our own lives, right into the manger of our hearts. This means that you and every man, woman, and child who has ever been born and is alive right now is essentially the Christ in potential, a spiritual being with the seed of God at the core of his or her being. This means that, as God's child, Isaiah's promise and Jesus' great life apply to you. It is about you. Therefore, the Christmas story is really your story. And as it has been said, *Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, if He is not born in thee, thy soul is still forlorn.*

The message will never be fulfilled until you understand that. All the ideas of the Christmas story have individual applications in you right now. All the main characters of the Bible story are involved in your own inner life in the Christmas that is to happen to you. Christmas has the power,

the spiritual power, to quicken these deep things of Christ in you. To make the promise happen—to bring forth in you the great drama of Christmas—the real celebration of Christmas is always an inner experience that occurs in you in which Christ is born in your consciousness.

It all happens in consciousness; it is an inner drama in which spiritual awareness is quickened in you. The Christ Spirit is literally born into your awareness and becomes a vital part of your humanity. And the inn, the manger, Mary and Joseph, the Wise Men, Herod, the shepherds, the animals, and the great Star all have their role in the drama of your inner Christmas.

Let's start with the inn. The inn represents your intellect. There was no room in the inn. The baby was born, therefore, in the manger. The manger is your heart, your emotions. It doesn't make any difference what the condition of your heart is—it can be a stable—yet Christ can still be born.

We are again involved with our own thoughts and feelings in the part Joseph and Mary play in the Christmas drama.

Joseph was the human father of Jesus. Men in the Bible represent the intellectual part of your mind—your thinking abil-

ity. Joseph had an intellectual use that was very high. Yet, from the very beginning he really didn't understand the whole process. He was told that he wasn't even involved in the original conception of this spiritual birth. But he still consented and was very happy to be the human father of the child—to protect, guide, support, and become the important father role in helping to raise the child. Our intellect can do that. The right state of

mind is very important to the growth of a new spiritual awareness in us.

Mary, as do all women in the Bible, represents the activity of our own emotional nature. Mary, the mother of Jesus, represents the very highest emotional experience that human beings can have: pure intuition. And this is how the Christ Spirit comes to us: through intuition. We read that when Mary was inspired with the knowledge that she



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was to give birth to the Christ child, she kept these things secret and pondered them in her heart; and then she magnified the Lord.

It was through Mary that Jesus was born. It is through the virgin awareness of pure intuition that the perfect Christ idea of our own spiritual identity is inspired. A pure heart always magnifies the Spirit of God in us.

The Ego

Herod is also a part of our intellect, a very important part to know about. He is the puppet king, the human ego. Our ego is almost always threatened by the birth of something new, so threatened that it tries to kill out the idea. The only thing that ever really keeps us from growing is our own ego. This is what we need to get out of the way. We are not essentially a human ego. Our ego identity is made up of all sorts of separate, diversified, and often conflicting concepts that we have stored in our memory along the way, coming together in many different ways and forming through us traits of thought and feeling that we call personality. We actually have many personalities within our human ego, but underneath is always the central identity of our true spiritual nature with

all the possibilities represented in the birth of the Christ child in us.

The shepherds and sheep from the peaceful Judean countryside again introduce us to the inner scene of our intellectual and emotional processes. The shepherd is the humble, trustworthy, often simple type of thought that (like Joseph) watches and tends with loving care the flock of feelings that are under its charge. The shepherd is often the hero in the Bible, and we can establish this quality of kind and peaceful but strong leadership in our own intellect. We can use our minds to gently guide and take care of our little thoughts and chase after the black sheep, to transmute all things in us so that they truly follow the Christ. When we let the shepherd-type thought take charge of our emotions, then we are open to the angelic inspiration that can come.

The Good News

Angels represent messages from God, divine inspiration and guidance that bring "*good tidings of a great joy.*" The message of the ages is about *Christ in you, the hope of glory.* This is the good news that the heavenly multitudes sing about to each of us.

And then we come to the

three Wise Men—the *three kings*. The Bible account doesn't mention the word *kings*, nor does it say how many there were, just *wise men from the East*. They were really Magi, astronomers and mystics. In the Bible, *East* symbolically means: *toward the rising sun; in the direction of the source, the spiritual realm of consciousness*. In the West, we are far more impressed by kings than by enlightened holy men. We also have a need for facts and statistics. It is very important for us to know who and how many. So, from the mentioning of three gifts, we have concluded that there were three kings; and in the Middle Ages, we even invented names for them. The Easterner, however, knew the poetry of the story and would no more strip it of its deeper meaning with facts than a wonder-filled child would try to figure out the aerodynamics of Santa's sleigh. Spiritually discerned, the Wise Men represent something wonderful in us. They represent that kind of higher wisdom and spiritual insight that can come right into our ordinary thoughts and feelings when we are open to the guidance of the great Star.

Charles Fillmore said that in the Bible a star always represents the possibilities of our own Christhood. Stars may

seem very remote, but they are bright if we look up to them. The Wise Men saw the Star in the East. There are various Western speculations about the Christmas Star. It has been suggested that it was a nova, or an exploding star, or a conjunction of planets. But, as we often do, unless we are spiritually inclined, we overlook something. Very few people saw that Star. Herod didn't see it. Only the illumined saw that Star. That Star represents our higher aspirations, something that we can see only when we have the consciousness, the open spiritual receptivity of the Eastern Wise Men.

The Wise Men were lead by inspiration to the birthplace of the Christ child, where they honored the Child with gifts and celebrated His birth. *Magi* comes from a word that has the same root as magnet and magic. Magnet: to draw to. Magic: to experience wonderment and excitement of things not understood. This is the special kind of consciousness that makes Christmas so special. To develop it, to be able to *see* that Star, we need to go apart awhile and experience the communion in the silence of the Secret Place. Here we can travel "East" into spiritual consciousness.

To be able to see that Star and follow it will bring forth

the beautiful spiritual qualities of our true nature. These can be our gifts to the Christ child in us.

The Christ is the greatest gift of all, for it is the gift of God's own nature expressing in us as us. But the law for receiving is giving. This Christmas, for the Christmas of your life, give the gifts of the Wise Men to the Christ child in you. There are three gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Material Possessions

Gold represents the material possessions which, when properly regarded, are good and necessary mediums through which we work out the divine plan in our lives. They are temporal but can be given spiritual significance and used for the glory of God. Our gift to the Christ child is to dedicate it all to God. Dedicate everything you possess, tangible and intangible, to God, and everything in your life will become a force for good and a powerful magnet for everything you truly need in life.

Symbol of Prayer

Frankincense is an incense, a beautiful symbol of prayer that we send upward into higher consciousness toward our aspirations. We can surround our-

selves during the Christmas season with an atmosphere of prayer, and this deep prayer commitment can open us to all sorts of wonderful things. Make even the activities of Christmas (like trimming the tree, sending cards, visiting friends, and buying and opening presents) prayerful experiences. This is prayer without ceasing, a great gift to the Christ child.

Symbol of Letting Go

The last gift is myrrh, which seems a rather strange gift, because it is embalming ointment. Myrrh is connected with burying the dead, with letting go of that which is no longer needed, especially those things that have a restricting or negating influence on us. (Paul said that by dying to these things daily, we begin our lives new each day.) It can also mean that not all the blessings in our lives appear as happy things. Many of the conditions that cause us to grow the most come to us in the form of adversities. Things that cause us to mourn can be converted by God into blessed experiences. If you have a heavy heart, an illness, a difficult problem, bring these to the Christ child as gifts. Turn your burdens over to the Christ Spirit, release them, and they will be

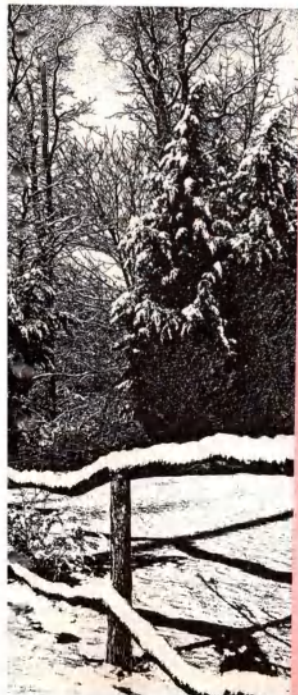
transmuted and exchanged for new life.

So, these are the three gifts we give Christ for Christmas: a dedication to God of everything in our lives, a deep prayer commitment, and a trusting surrender of the lesser in our lives for the greater—a higher consciousness.

Perhaps the last thing to do, then, is to remember that Jesus Christ grew up into the most magnificent personage the world has ever known. He lived out the great message of *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. He was the Christ of God in every way, for only a Christ could reveal the Christ. He grew from an infant into a God-

like man and took the responsibility of the entire world on His shoulders. Friend, the Christ that can be born in you can do that for you. The Spirit of Christ can take over the government of the entire world and work out all the problems for the greatest good of all. But to do that Christ must first be born in you.

May Christmas happen to you this year as never before! May you be guided to that potentiality of Spirit that is waiting to be born in you! May you know that the prophecy of Isaiah is about Christ in you! May this be the Christmas of your life!



Night of Stars

By R. H. Grenville

Moving lightly over the snow
of silent hills
on the eve of Christmas,
we look for the Star,
remembering the sign that was given.
But the night is ablaze with stars,
and the valley below
is a maze of starry lights, moving and glowing.
Your face is radiant too.
On this night of benediction and of joy
the heart of Love with light is overflowing.

The Sign

BY
GEORGE R. HAUSMANN

WHY DID THE WISE MEN in Matthew's Christmas story see the Star, but Herod and his council did not? Why did the angels in Luke's Christmas story go out into the fields to tell the shepherds the news, instead of telling the people at the inn?

I am continually amazed by the fact that the Bible reveals things to me that have gone unnoticed through many years of reading and rereading.

The Christmas stories, as told by Matthew and Luke, are no exception. Many times I read these accounts before I became aware that the folks nearby the place of the birth of Jesus didn't know what was going on, yet the Wise Men and the shepherds (all of whom were far away) were made aware.

Another question came to me: Are we not glad that we have Matthew and Luke's Christmas stories? What kind of Christmases would we have today if we did not have these stories?

But we do have Matthew with the Wise Men and Herod. And are we not sometimes like

Herod and his advisers—even today—even at Christmas-time—when we become so wrapped up in the things of the world that we cannot see the blessings of God in our own backyard?

How we stop the flow of good when we have thoughts of jealousy or feelings that someone can take our good away from us!

In Luke's version the folks at the inn were so busy with the goings on that they couldn't hear the angels. Some were probably celebrating seeing old friends or relatives whom they had not seen since the last census or other occasion for visiting Bethlehem. There may have been some who were so angry over having to come so far when they could have been doing things they wanted to do back home that they closed their eyes to the light of the Star or turned a deaf inner ear to the promptings of Spirit.

We can rejoice, however, for there are still the "Wise Men" within each of us who see the light and are willing to tell others the good news.

And we can rejoice that there are angels who go out to where the shepherds are in the fields of peace and quiet (prayer and meditation).

The story said that the shepherds were watching over their flocks by night.

And so it is with us. The angels seek us out when we are watching over our thoughts and feelings—often by night, in the quiet time, just as God came to Adam and Eve in the cool of the night, and as Nicodemus came to Jesus in the night.

When we are calm, cool, relaxed, and put the activities of the day to rest, then we become aware of our spiritual nature—the Christ within the manger of our hearts.

But how often we find this babe in the manger wrapped in the confining clothes of limitation. Is He not sometimes wrapped so tightly in fear, doubt, worry, and anxiety that He is unable to shine forth as

peace, joy, health, and plenty?

Charles Fillmore wrote: *But Jesus knew how the human mind wraps itself up in its own error thought and brings darkness and desolation beyond redemption, unless the light of divine understanding is released in the consciousness.*

Another thought comes to me concerning the virgin birth. Neither Mary nor Joseph had anything to do with the planning of it. Mary conceived; but it was God's doing.

So it is with us. The Christ within is God's gift of Himself to us. We have nothing to do with it, except just being what we are.

All Mary and Joseph had to do with it all was to bring forth the child in all His glory and to care for Him until He grew and waxed strong.

During that time they did have to watch over Him and listen and be obedient to the instruction and direction of God.

The Christ within each of us is the gift of God from the beginning. But it is only during the quiet time of prayer—a time of being apart from the things of the world—that we find that we are “with child.”

Bringing forth the Christ, God's divine idea, is our daily mission. We have the sign, now comes the task of removing the swaddling clothes of ignorance and error.



Letters to the Editor

My thanks to the faithful UNITY Magazine staff which continues to put together these inspired collections of truths. Each time I finish another of your publications I say, "This has to be the very best," and then I say the same thing over again and again. God loves you all and I do too!—*K.T., Michigan.*



Thank you for my most welcome UNITY Magazine. I'm sure I shall never tire of reading the lovely poems and stories. In every issue there is a particular article which seems to help me in my daily life. Many times I have blessed the day I came across an old UNITY Magazine. From that moment I have felt uplifted.—*B.H., England.*



God has indeed worked through you folks at Unity and has changed my life! UNITY Magazine has brought me many hours of great comfort and joy. All the articles seem to be geared to what is currently happening in my life. It is as though I've waited all my life to meet you. Bless you!—*L.M., Maryland.*

The articles in UNITY Magazine are thought-provoking and stimulating—a reaching out for a response to new ideas. Certainly, thoughtful people everywhere are becoming much aware of the mind's potential and of the power of the subconscious.—*J.S., Canada.*

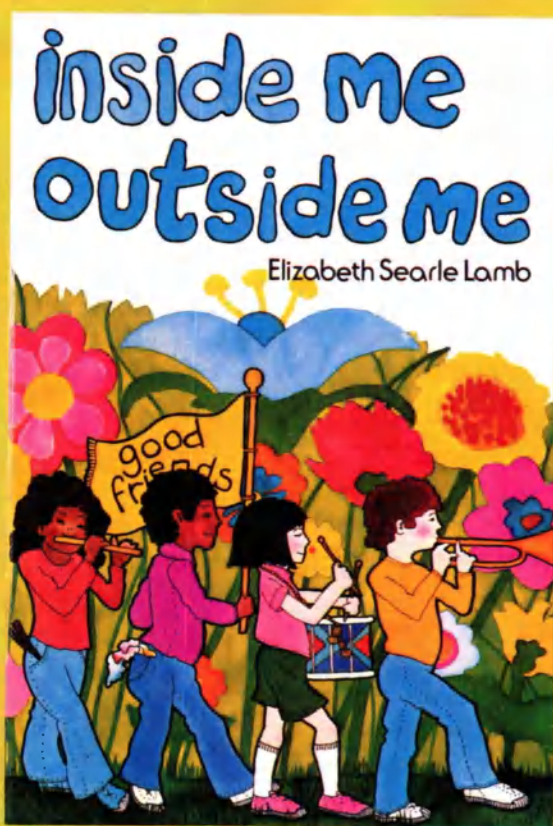


I haven't expressed my sincere love for the UNITY Magazine I receive each month. I am truly so grateful for this wonderful magazine, and I have found the answers to so many of my problems. It is beautifully written.—*H.C., West Virginia.*



Some months ago I accepted your generous offer of a trial free subscription to UNITY Magazine and I have been ever so grateful that I did; and I want to thank you for it. This letter is to tell you though that your June 1980 issue was certainly the most wonderful yet, and I am sure it was written especially for me! Thank you again for all the good you are bringing to so many people.—*G.S., California.*

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