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PAPERS (3014)**

BOX 9

FOLDER 28

**THE CELEBRATION OF
LIFE**

DECEMBER 22, 1974

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LONGFELLOW:

I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY
THEIR OLD FAMILIAR CAROLS PLAY,
AND WILD AND SWEET
THE WORDS REPEAT,
OF PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN.

YES...CHRISTMAS IS COMING...AND, MUCH AS WE
MAY EXPERIENCE OCCASIONAL DREAD OR RESISTANCE
TO THE PRESSURES TO CONFORM...WE USUALLY GET
SWEPT OFF OUR FEET BY ITS COMPELLING AIR.

THE SINGING OF CAROLS, THE TRIMMING OF THE TREE,
THE WREATHS OF HOLLY AND SPRIGS OF MISTLETOE, AND
RED AND WHITE POINSETTIAS EVERYWHERE.

THE GLOW OF CANDLELIGHT AND TINSEL, THE
FRAGRANCE OF PINE...AND THE SPICY AROMAS COMING
FROM THE KITCHEN...AND THE WIDE-EYED EXCITEMENT
OF CHILDREN.

THE EXCITEMENT OF CHRISTMAS EVE, A WALK DOWN PARK
AVE., THE FAIRYLAND OF LIGHTS AT RADIO CITY,
THE MUSIC AND PAGEANTRY ON TV...

AND THE CHRISTMAS CRECHES...RETELLING THE
STORY OF JOSEPH AND MARY AND THE STABLE OF
THE INN OF BETHLEHEM WHERE THERE HAD BEEN NO
ROOM...AND THE WISE MEN AND SHEPHERDS...AND
THE STAR OF THE EAST...AND THE MAGNIFICENCE
OF THAT NATIVITY SCENE IN THE MANGER.

AND YET...ALL THIS IS ON THE SURFACE...A FACADE
THAT IS PASTED ON, AND A CHARADE WHAT WE ANNUALLY
PLAY. UNLESS OUR CHRISTMAS GOES DEEPER THAN
THIS...IT COMES AND GOES...LEAVING OUR HEADS
SWIMMING, AND POSSIBLY OUR POCKETBOOKS EMPTY...
AND THERE MAY WELL BE THE FEELING: WHAT WAS
THAT ALL ABOUT?

THERE IS A TENDENCY IN MAN TO LOSE THE REAL MEANING OF PROFOUND EXPERIENCES BY SETTLING INTO RITUAL AND HABITUAL PRACTICE. THIS IS THE WHOLE HISTORY OF RELIGION. A BEAUTIFUL HOLY DAY IN TIME BECOMES A HOLIDAY, AND EVENTUALLY BECOMES A HOLLOW DAY.

ASK THE QUESTION, ~~WHAT~~ WHAT DOES CHRISTMAS MEAN? THE AVERAGE PERSON... IF HE CAN GET OUT OF ~~THE~~ SANTA CLAUS SYNDROME... ~~AND THE ENTIRE GETTING GAME PLAYED BY CHILDREN AND ADULTS ALIKE.~~ WOULD SAY... "CHRISTMAS IS THE BIRTHDAY OF JESUS."

IT MIGHT SURPRISE ^{THIS} ~~THE AVERAGE~~ PERSON TO HEAR ME SAY THAT THIS IS PROBABLY NOT THE DAY JESUS WAS BORN. THERE IS NO ACCURATE HISTORY ON THE EARLY LIFE OF JESUS... ONLY A VARIETY OF CONFLICTING LEGENDS.

THE DATE, DECEMBER 25TH, WAS SET BY A CHURCH HISTORIAN IN THE SIXTH CENTURY AD -- UNDOUBTEDLY INFLUENCED BY THE ROMAN FEAST OF SATURNALIA WHICH OCCURRED AT THIS TIME.

THE EXACT DATE IS NOT ALL THAT IMPORTANT... FOR CHRISTMAS IS NOT JUST THE BIRTHDAY OF JESUS AND THE COMMEMORATION OF THE NATIVITY IN BETHLEHEM.

IT IS INTENDED TO CELEBRATE... NOT JESUS, BUT THE CHRIST SPIRIT THAT HE REVEALED. AS THE POET SINGS:

"THOUGH CHRIST A THOUSAND TIMES IN BETHLEHEM BE BORN -- IF ~~HES~~ HES NOT BORN ~~IN~~ IN THEE, THY SOUL IS ALL FORLORN."

CHRIST WAS NOT BORN IN BETHLEHEM... JESUS WAS. THE BIRTH OF THE CHRIST GOES BACK TO GENESIS 1:

• Kdove
- Raskin

"GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE." PERFECT MAN FORMED IN THE MIND OF GOD. JESUS WAS NOT THE CREATION OF THE CHRIST IN MAN, BUT THE REVEALING OF THE CHRIST AND THE FULFILLMENT OF IT IN HIM. BUT IT DOESN'T END THERE. IT FORETELLS OF THE CHRIST IN YOU...AND COMPELS YOU ON TO YOUR OWN AWAKENING OF IT. GOD-SPELL

SO THE PROBLEM OF CHRISTMAS...~~WHY IT OFTEN BECOMES A HOLLOW DAY~~, IS THAT IT HAS BEEN A BIRTHDAY...CELEBRATING JESUS...RATHER THAN A ~~COMMITMENT DAY~~...CELEBRATING THE TRANSCENDENT LIFE IN MAN.

JESUS SAID: WHY CALLEST THOU ME GOOD, NONE IS GOOD SAVE GOD. DONT CELEBRATE ME...CELEBRATE LIFE...THE DIVINE FLOW IN MAN.

AS TROWARD SAYS: "JESUS CAME, NOT TO PROCLAIM HIMSELF, BUT MAN: NOT TO TELL US OF HIS OWN DIVINITY SEPARATING HIM FROM THE RACE AND MAKING HIM THE GREAT EXCEPTION, BUT TO TELL US OF OUR DIVINITY AND TO SHOW IN HIMSELF THE GREAT EXAMPLE OF THE "I AM" REACHING ITS FULL PERSONAL EXPRESSION IN MAN."

PEOPLE LAUGHED, OR CRIED "SACRILEGE", WHEN WALT WHITMAN WROTE, "I CELEBRATE MYSELF" -- BUT THAT IS REALLY WHAT CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT...THE CELEBRATION OF THE GOD-POTENTIAL IN MAN. you

HOW EASILY THINGS DETERIORATE INTO HOLLOW PAGEANTS. POINTED UP BY THE CLASSIC COMMENT OF TWO WOMAN ON THEIR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING EXCURSION...CAME TO LOVELY WINDOW WITH AN ANIMATED CRECHE...ONE SAID TO THE OTHER: "WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT...EVEN THE CHURCH IS TRYING TO GET INTO THE ACT."

WORD DERIVATIONS SHOW MUCH ABOUT HOW BEAUTIFUL IDEAS DETERIORATE, IN 1247, ENGLAND, ST. MARY OF BETHLEHEM HOSPITAL STARTED. 200 YEARS LATER, IT HAD BECOME HOSPITAL FOR INSANE. INSTEAD OF QUIET PLACE OF DPEACE AND HEALING... IT BECAME PLACE OF DISORDER AND CONFUSION..AND WILD NOISES

NAME BETHLEHEM BECAME XN "BETHLAM"...AND LATER "BEDLAM." NOW WHEN WE THINK OF NOISE AND CONFU¹₂ SION WE MAY SAY, "THE PLACE IS A BEDLAM."

NOTE HOW CHRISTMAS ITSELF...HAS BEEN CORRUPTED INTO XMAS... X-DAY, A DAY ~~W~~ WITH NO MEANING OTHER THAN THE EXCUSE FOR BUYING AND SELLING, GIFT GIVING AND RECEIVING, AND OFLFICE PARTIES.

HOW CAN WE RECAPTURE THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF CHRISTMAS. SOME SAY, "LETS PUT CHRIST BACK INTO CHRISTMAS." BUT WHAT IS CHRIST?...A PLASTER-OF-PARIS BABE IN THE CRECHE? A PAINFUL FIGURE ON A CROSS? CHRIST IS THE PRINCIPLE OF THE DIVINITY OF MAN.

THE NEED IS TO PUT LIFE ^{you} BACK INTO CHRISTMAS... LIFE TRANSCENDENT...THE TRUE LIFE WITHIN EVERYONE THE LIFE WHICH IS THE SPARK OF DIVINITY, WHICH ONE MAY DESECRATE BUT NEVER QUITE LOSE.

G.B.S. "LIFE IS A FLAME WHICH IS ALWAYS BURNING ITSELF OUT, BUT IT CATCHES FIRE AGAIN EVERY TIME A CHILD IS BORN."

AND A CHILD IS BORN EVERY TIME YOU GIVE EXPRES- SION TO SOMETHING OF THE TRANSCENDENCE OF YOUR CHRIST SELF. CHRISTMAS CALLS TO THIS AWAKENING WITHIN YOU. THE BIRTH OF THE CHILD IT CELEBRATES IS NOT THE GALILEAN 2000 YRS AGO...BUT THE THE GOD-CHILD IN YOU.

WE GET ALL CAUGHT UP IN THE OUTSIDE OF CHRISTMAS AND FAIL TO GET INSIDE. WE TRY TO MAKE IT HAPPEN FOR US...AND FAIL TO LET IT HAPPEN IN US. AND IT CAN HAPPEN IN YOU...AND WILL, IF YOU EXPECT IT AND NURTURE IT...AND CELEBRATE THE TRUE LIFE AT THE HEART OF YOU.

ONE THING SURE...NOTHING OF CHRISTMAS IS GOING TO COME TO US ROUTINELY ON DECEMBER 25TH...AND NOTHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN IN US BY SOME FIAT OF GOD AT THIS TIME.

WEDNESDAY WILL BE A DAY LIKE ANY OTHER DAY...THE SUN WILL RISE AND SET ROUTINELY. BUT IT CAN BE A VERY SPECIAL DAY OF AWAKENING IF WE MAKE IT A SPECIAL DAY OF COMMITMENT TO THE INNER FLOW.

IT IS INTERESTING THAT CHRISTMAS HAS BEEN SET RIGHT AT THE TIME OF THE WINTER SOLSTICE, THE TIME WHEN THE SUN IS AT ITS GREATEST DISTANCE FROM THE CELESTIAL EQUATOR -- ABOUT DEC. 22ND.

AND IT IS INTERESTING THAT MOST CULTURES IN ALL HISTORY HAVE HAD SOME CELEBRATION AT THIS SEASON...RECOGNITION OF THE REBIRTH OF LIGHT INTO THE WORLD.

IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY'S DRAMA, "THE WOLF OF GUBBIO" IS SIGNIFICANT. IT DEALS WITH MAN'S ATTEMPT TO FIND WHOLENESS THROUGH REALIZING HIS UNITY WITH ALL LIFE...EXPERIENCING A QUICKENING OF LIGHT THAT LEADS TO MASTERING THE BESTIAL ELEMENTS OF HIS NATURE.

THE PLAY IS MEDIEVAL IN SETTING, BASED ON A
LEGEND ABOUT SAINT FRANCIS. IN THE TITLE ROLE
THE WOLF PORTRAYS MAN'S DUAL NATURE... THE UPWARD
PULL OF THE DIVINE, AND THE DOWNWARD PULL OF
THE BEAST -- THE TWO CONTENDING FORCES IN MAN.

ON THE MORNING OF A BRIGHT COLD WINTER DAY,
AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE BLEAK REFRAIN OF THE
WIND... COMES THE VOICE OF THE WOLF:

"THE WORLD IS COLD.
THE SNOWS ARE ROUND US, FOLD ON FOLD.
THIS OLD UNHAPPY HEART
DOES NAUGHT TO KEEP ME WARM.
... I HIDE FROM STORM TO STORM
WATCHING THE LITTLE LIGHTS BELOW,
LIGHTS FOR THE MEN OF GUBBIO."

THIS IS LIFE AT ITS LOWER LEVEL, BECOMING CON-
SCIOUS OF LIMITATION AND WANT, BUT DREAMING OF
WARMTH AND LIGHT. THERE IS ALWAYS AN ASCENDING
URGE IN MAN. WOLF BEWAILS HIS SORROW AND LONGING
~~AND REALIZES THAT NO ONE WOULD BELIEVE...~~ HE HEARS
A BELL IN THE DISTANCE, AND HIS HEART OPENS...

"...WONDERING HOW TWOULD FEEL
TO SIT WITH MEN AND SHARE THEIR MEAL"

HE HAD PREYED ON THE PEOPLE OF GUBBIO SO HE LIVED
IN DEADLY FEAR OF THEM AND THEY OF HIM. BUT HIS
ASPIRATION DRAWS UNTO ITSELF THE LIGHT. ST.
FRANCIS APPEARS SINGING PRAISES: "O BROTHER
SUN, ALL-FOLDING LIGHT." HE SYMBOLIZES THE
COMING INTO CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE LIGHT.

SO IN THIS MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO, THE WOLF
CONFESSES HIS BEASTLY BEHAVIOR... AND HIS LONGING
TO BE A MAN. INTERESTING DIALOGUE...

LIKE JESUS IN WILDERNESS WITH SATAN...THE
UPWARD URGE...THE DOWNWARD PULL.

ONCE THE WOLF PULLS BACK, 'I DONT WANT TO BE A
MAN, UNTIL MEN STOP ACTING LIKE WOLVES.'

BUT FINALLY, ON CHRISTMAS EVE AROUND A CRECHE
ERECTED BY ST. FRANCIS, THE WOLF OF GUBBIO IN AN
ACT OF CONTRITION AND COMMITMENT, DISSOLVES
FEAR AND ANTAGONISM AND EARNS HIS PLACE IN THE
RANKS OF LOVE AND BROTHERHOOD. AND FRANCIS
SINGS:

"OH, AND THE VERY STARS SHALL SING
FOR THE JOY OF THIS GLAD THING.
THO WE CROWN HIM YET WITH THORN,
THO WE LAUGH HIM ALL TO SCORN,
LOVE, - LOVE IS BORN."

AND HE CONCLUDES:

"AND IF THERE BE OUT YONDER ANY WOLF,
OR GREAT OR SMALL, BEHOLD &
COME LITTLE BROTHER WOLVES, COME HITHER
OUT OF THE COLD."

IT IS A BEAUTIFUL SYMBOL OF AN AWAKENING TO
THE GREATNESS OF LIFE, THE TRUE CELEBRATION OF
MAN-GOD-SIZE IN THE HEART OF ALL OF US.

THIS IS REALLY WHAT CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT! THERE
IS MUCH OF THE PETTY, THE MEAN, THE BESTIAL IN
THE BEHAVIOR OF MAN. BUT WITHIN ALL PERSONS
IS THE DREAM OF THE POTENTIAL FOR GOOD. IT IS
THE JONATHAN LIVINGSTONE SEAGULL DREAM IN US ALL

BUT THERE IS A COMMITMENT INVOLVED. IN THE FLOW
OF THE CHRISTMAS CONSCIOUSNESS IT IS A LITTLE
EASIER. BUT IT WILL NOT JUST HAPPEN OF ITSELF.
IT DOESNT COME TO YOU...BUT THROUGH YOU.

HOW DO YOU KNOW HOW YOU ARE DOING?..WHERE YOU REALLY ARE IN CONSCIOUSNESS?

"YOU CAN TELL WHAT YOU BELIEVE BY HOW YOU FIND YOURSELF ACTING."

ONE SURE TEST OF WHETHER CHRISTMAS IS REALLY HAPPENING IN YOU...IS: CAN YOU LOOK AT THE DOWNTRODDEN, THE DISEASED, THE DIRTY, THE IGNORANT, EVEN THE MISGUIDED CRIMINAL -- AND SAY: NOT "I REJECT YOU FOR YOUR SQUALOR AND IGNORANCE AND FILTH. I REJECT YOU FOR WHAT YOU ARE."

BUT RATHER: I ~~REJECT~~ YOUR SQUALOR AND IGNORANCE AND FILTH...BUT I BEHOLD THE CHRIST IN YOU AND I CELEBRATE THE DIVINITY THAT YOU CAN BE.

LET THE ASCENDING URGE WITHIN YOU LIFT YOU UP IN CONSCIOUSNESS...AND MAKE CHRISTMAS LIFE-SIZED. AFFIRM:

"CHRIST IS BORN IN ME THIS DAY,
Hallowed be his presence within me.

"I CELEBRATE MY TRUE SELF...AND IN THIS ACT OF CELEBRATION I LOVE AND FORGIVE ALL PERSONS
I FREELY GIVE THE BLESSING OF LOVE AND PEACE."

THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT IT...THERE CAN NEVER BE THE AWAKENING OF A NEW RACE OF MAN, UNTIL THERE IS A CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE THAT TRANSCENDS THE HUMAN. CHRISTMAS IS THE BEST POSSIBLE LABORATORY OPPORTUNITY...THOUGH LETS DONT KID OURSELVE THAT MANY PERSONS WORK AT THIS CELEBRATION

YET I BELIEVE STRONGLY THAT THERE CAN BE A REBIRTH OF LIGHT...AN AWAKENING OF SPIRITUAL MAN, A RENAISSANCE OF PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN
IT IS A REVOLUTIONARY IDEA BUT A SOCIETY THAT CAN PUT MEN ON THE MOON AND PROBE DISTANT PLANETS CAN CERTAINLY CONQUER INNER SPACE.

SOME MAY SAY..."COME ON NOW, HOW CAN ONE PERSON CHANGE THE WAY THINGS ARE IN THE WORLD?"

DONT FALL FOR THAT TRAP...FOR IT IS EASY TO ~~SOME~~ EMPHASIZE ONES POWERLESSNESS AS TO SETTLE INTO PROCRASTINATION AND INACTION...AND THE OBSERVANCE OF HOLLOW DAYS OF CHRISTMAS.

~~IT IS LIKELY THAT THE YOUNG MAN, JESUS, WONDERED WHAT ONE PERSON COULD DO TO CHANGE THE WORLD. PERHAPS PAUL WONDERED WHAT ONE PERSON COULD DO.~~

A PROFESSOR^{TOY} AT HARVARD PUT TOGETHER THE MODERN SCHOLARSHIP ABOUT THE BIBLE, AND ANNOUNCED TO HIS COLLEAGUES THAT HE WAS GOING TO BEGIN TEACHING THE NEW INSIGHT. THEY SAID, AW COME ON IT WOULD TAKE 500 YEARS TO CHANGE THE ESTABLISHED TRADITIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE.

HE BEGAN^{1st} HIS CLASS WITH THE STATEMENT..."THEY SAY IT WILL TAKE 500 YEARS TO CHANGE TRADITION...LET THE RECORD SHOW THAT WE ARE BEGINNING TODAY."

IT MAY TAKE GENERATIONS TO ALTER TRENDS IN OUR SOCIETY...TO AWAKEN A NEW AWARENESS OF THE DIVINITY OF MAN...BUT IT CAN BEGIN WITH YOU RIGHT NOW.

CANON EARARS CLASSIC LINES:

I AM ONLY ONE, BUT I AM ONE,
I CANT DO EVERYTHING, BUT I CAN DO SOMETHING
WHAT I CAN DO I OUGHT TO DO, AND WHAT I
OUGHT TO DO,..BY THE GRACE OF GOD I WILL DO

SO...WE URGE YOU TO LOOK BEYOND THE ~~FACE~~ AND ~~THE~~ THROUGH THE CHARADE...IT IS ALL GOOD AND EXCITING AND NOSTALGIC...BUT UNLESS WE GET INTO THE CELEBRATION OF LIFE...ALL OTHER CELEBRATION WILL BE HOLLOW AND FARCICAL.

AND WHEN YOU SING THE CAROLS ABOUT THE BABE
BORN IN THE MANGER...KNOW THAT YOU ARE THE BABE,
THE CHILD OF GOD IN YOU. AND GET SO FILLED
WITH THAT CHRIST PROCESS IN YOU ~~ARE~~ LED TO
GO FORWARD, LIKE THE SHEP HERDS AND WISE MEN,
TO PAY HOMAGE WITH GIFTS. YOU GO FORWARD TO
MAKE YOUR CELEBRATION OF LIFE IN TERMS OF THE
NEW COMMITMENT TO THE HIGHWAY IN YOUR EXPERIENCE

AND REMEMBER...THE INNER MEANING OF CHRISTMAS
DEALS NOT JUST WITH THE BIRTHDAY OF JESUS...
BUT THE NEW BIRTH OF YOUR OWN GOD & SELF.

LET EVERY "MERRY CHRISTMAS" GREETING...BE A
SINCERE BLESSING TO OTHERS AND ACCEPTED FOR
YOURSELF - RELATING TO THE CELEBRATION OF THE
TRUE LIFE WITHIN YOU.