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BOX 13

FOLDER 14

**THE CHRISTMAS
CONSCIOUSNESS**

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Angela Morgan: "Oh, it isn't the holly, it isn't the snow,
It isn't the tree, or the firelight's glow;
It's the flame that goes from the hearts of men,
When Christmas love is abroad again.
So great the shining, so pure the blaze,
It reaches beyond through the stellar ways,
And this is the signal that makes them know
We have hearths and homes and cheer below.
Why, gods and angels walk by the light
That streams from the earth on Christmas night!"

The sight and sound and smell of Christmas are in the air. It is a magic time... the singing of carols, the trimming of the tree, the candlelight and tinsel, the sprigs of mistletoe, the lights of Radio City, the Santa Clauses ringing their little bells on street corners...and Christmas creches everywhere, 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 the shepherds...and the star of the East...

Pure magic! But like all magic there is illusion and sleight of hand involved. For the mistletoe is probably plastic...symbolizing the giant facade of Christmas that has been erected like a Hollywood set - taken out of attics and storerooms and carefully assembled at this season so that most persons may dutifully and slavishly go through the annual charade.

Now, mind you, I believe in Christmas, and I never find it difficult to erect the facade year after year, or to engage in the charade with renewed enthusiasm. But the reason it comes easy is that I remind myself that it is a charade...a game we play...with a beautiful inner meaning. It is like uncovering the road marker. It is not the destination. It is only a pointer suggesting the road to take. Thus, Christmas calls for a personal effort to awaken the Christmas consciousness.

What does Christmas mean? The average person, if he could rise above the Santa Claus syndrome, would probably say that it is the birthday of Jesus. But if there is ~~one~~ thing December 25th is not, it is the day Jesus was born. There is no history of the early life of Jesus at all...only a variety of conflicting legends. The December 25th date was arbitrarily set by a now obscure church historian in the 6th Century AD, and without any question the date was influenced by the Roman feast of Saturnalia, which occurred at this time.

From the days of man's first glimpse into spiritual things, he has had the hope for better things to come, and for a greater releasement of the divine depths within all persons. This hope took the form of symbols such as heaven, and with the Jewish prophets of the Old Testament it took the form of a Messiah or King who was to bring deliverance to his people and exalt them to the highest pinnacle of national glory. The vision of one who was to change all things kept the Jewish people on the very tiptoe of expectancy.

The hope of the prophet Isaiah many years before the birth of Jesus inspired him to proclaim, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

The thing that has clouded the Christmas story is that tradition has erroneously taught that the prophetic hope of old was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, while actually it was revealed through Him. The true hope of man was not Jesus, but the innate divinity of man that Jesus discovered and that Paul called "Christ in you... your hope of glory."

So...though the story of Christmas begins in the legends and prophetic utterances

of old and carries through the years to find expression in the mystic night of wonder when the Child is born in the manger of Bethlehem, ~~It~~ is not finished there. It must go on. Jesus continued to tell of the hope of man...of letting the light of God shine through the individual. So the story of Christmas is an unfinished symphony that must be resolved into completion by a manger scene within each of us as we give birth to the Christ within ourselves.

We do not really know when Jesus was born...or really very much about the circumstances. But when we understand His mission, it is not all that important. ~~For Jesus did not~~ For Jesus did not come to proclaim himself but man...not to tell us of His divinity, making him the great exception; but to tell us of our divinity, and to show in his overcoming the great example of the "I AM" reaching its full personal expression in man. Thus the great event in the life of Jesus was not His birth at all, but the awakening that took place within him during the years of his growth...the discovery of the divine dimension of man.

We see then that the story of the town of Bethlehem on that night of nights has been sentimentalized, and thus made unreal. Like a movie that we watch for an hour...have a good cry over...and then go out into lives of drabness and routine, not the least bit changed by the experience.

It is often said that Christmas is too commercial, but commercialism is not what is wrong. It is still commerce whether it is the manufacture and sale of Bibles or altars or items for gift-giving like watches or neck ties or tinkertoys. The problem is not materialism, but a false spiritual involvement. The three wise men, the star of Bethlehem, and the Babe in the manger...these make it tempting and easy for us to forget what the whole thing is about. For they deal with something of another day and another world that is totally irrelevant to ours. We can engage in it, use the theme for decorations, sing the carols, paste it as a face over our everyday lives, and not really get involved in it. As the poet sings, "Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, if He's not born in thee thy soul is all forlorn."

It is often said, "Christmas is for children" -and certainly the children are very much at the center of most of our plans and preparations. But there is so much more. The Christmas consciousness is the resurgent yearning for growth, for change. It is a time of celebration of the I AM self at the heart of you.

And, in a way, it is for children, for it deals with the Christ child within. When we worship a child as we do at Christmas we worship the future, we celebrate new dreams, new hopes, and new horizons. And this is the significance of the Shepherds and the Wise men who came to worship the child. They were captivated by an idea. Can you still become enthused about the Christ child within? The greatest thing about life is living, and to live is to keep alive the sense of wonder, romance, and expectancy. When we lose this feeling something important goes out of us.

This was not true of the Shepherds or the Magi from the East. They may have been old men, but they had the wonder and awe of the child. The shepherds said, "Let us go and see this thing that has come to pass." And the wise men were still chasing stars at seventy.

The star of the East is the intuitive feeling of the transcendence of life, it is the very urge to transcend. But the Innkeeper of Bethlehem all-too-often says, "There is no room in the Inn" - referring to the rigidity of the mind that can not let go of its prejudices and self-limiting beliefs. How common it is to become so preoccupied with the externals of Christmas that there is no room or time to let the beauty of the Christ express unfold. We are upset at the clerks in the stores, we become impatient with the eager excitement of children, and we may become tense and irritable with our preoccupation with the status-seeking and conformity ridden gift-giving.

THE CHRISTMAS CONSCIOUSNESS

Angela Morgan: "Oh, it isn't the holly, it isn't the snow,
It isn't the tree, or the firelight's glow;
~~When Christmas comes it comes from the hearts of men,~~
It's the flame that goes from the hearts of men,
When Christmas love is abroad again.
So great the shining, so pure the blaze,
It reaches beyond through the stellar ways,
And this is the signal that makes them know
We have hearths and homes and cheer below.
Why, gods and angels walk by the light
That streams from the earth on Christmas night!"

As we refer to our national fall festival as Thanksgiving, we might use the expression, "LOVEGIVING" to designate the world's Christmas season. For love and giving are traditionally associated with the season that marks Jesus' coming into the world. "God so loved...that he gave."

There is a magic of Christmas, but it deals with the kind of experience perceived by the shepherds in the field and the Wiseman of the East, who heard a voice and followed a star that led to the awareness of the child in the manger of Bethlehem and the Divinity in the depths of ourselves.

It is often said, "Christmas is for children." This is true, but it is of the Christ child within us, and for the divine potential -within all men everywhere. When we worship a child as we do at Christmas we worship the future. When a baby is born, a new possibility of something wonderful is born with him. So when we celebrate the birth of a baby we celebrate new dreams, new hopes, and new horizons. The magic of Christmas is found when we look beyond the story of Jesus in the manger and look forward to the day when that little Christ child will come forth in us.

What is the magic of Christmas? Is it the singing of carols, the trimming of the tree, the glow of candlelight and tinsel? Is it the spicy aroma coming from the kitchen, the happy excitement of children, or the warmth of family gatherings? Yes, it is all of these, but more. It is the magic of believing and loving and dreaming, the magic of the mind that can make real for us all that we can conceive. It is kneeling for awhile at the manger of our heart, dwelling silently as we are imbued with the peace and poise and power of our own indwelling Christ.

It is wishing on a star and then realizing that we are living on a star, which means that all the infinite potentialities and possibilities are all around and within us. It is the discovery that we do not need to attempt to read our destiny in the stars. Our destiny depends on how we live on this star.

It is the determination to go out and give ourselves away, to act as if we really believed that in the manger of our heart there is a Christ child who must grow in wisdom and stature. It is the will to be about the business of acting from the Divinity in ourselves and relating to the Divinity in others.

Christmas is a safety zone in our harried world, a season and a spirit. For for a few happy weeks we let the divine law of giving operate in our lives, and we get even more than we give; we get an atmosphere of happiness, and we get the kind of world we want to live in.

The great event in the life of Jesus was not His birth, but the awakening that took place within Him during the years of His growth. It was His discovery of the Divinity of Man that Christmas should celebrate -- the Mass of Christ, the celebration of a dynamic and vital and very personal depth within each one of us.

So, the celebration of Christmas, must involve us with the dynamics of the life of Jesus and the application of His message - and not just the romantic tradition about His birth. Jesus teachings are not easy to apply, but let us not evade them: "Love one another." And putting it even more strongly, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar." If this central fact is ignored or explained away, Christianity becomes just another primitive "magic" religion.

Whitman:
"Celebrate Myself"

As I said last year, I have a special feeling for Ebenezer Scrooge. He has had a bum rap, becoming the caricature of the mean, the selfish, the materialistic. But we miss the meaning of the 'Christmas Carol', which is a story of metamorphosis... a dramatic growth experience. We remember him only as he was, not as he dramatically became: a sensitive employer, a second father to tiny-Tim. The story ends, "Scrooge knew how to keep Christmas." Do you?

Scrooge is an excellent symbol of what Christmas is about...both the before and after of his change. If we can make room in our heart for the awakening of the Christmas consciousness, the latter transformation can manifest as dramatically for us as it did for Scrooge. There is magic in the Christmas consciousness, and if we let ourselves be swayed by it, there is a contagion to its influence. Wonderful things can happen in the manger of our heart: the birth of a new awareness of our self-worth, the awakening of a healing flow, the star of guidance in the East leading us to new prosperity and creativity. The Christmas consciousness is a healing consciousness, a prosperity consciousness, and most of all, a love consciousness. For Christmas is love.

As we refer to our national fall festival as Thanksgiving, we might think of Christmas as "LOVEGIVING" For love and giving are traditionally associated with the season. "Merry Lovegiving" to each of you, and may you put love into all that you give and, give love to all whom you know. For this is the focus of the Christmas consciousness.

I would like to suggest that you use the ancient words of Isaiah as a personal covenant: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders...and his name shall be called wonderful, counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.:

Perhaps you have been trying to carry the government on your shoulders. You are a child of God, one with the divine flow. You can let go and let it flow at any time of personal need.

"And his name shall be called..." This is more much than a prophecy. It is a command. Decree for yourself an identification with these great synonyms set forth by Isaiah: WONDERFUL - You are wonderful. I claim it. You are full of wonder...a true wonder child

COUNSELOR - You are one with the guidance principle...you have the wise counsel of the Presence that always knows your needs and is the readily available answer.

MIGHTY GOD - God in you is omnipotent. Things may threaten you from without, but the power of God indwelling you is equal to any threat.

EVERLASTING FATHER - this establishes your relationship...you are forever in spiritual unity...always, and not just when you are praying that this is what God is supposed to be.

PRINCE OF PEACE - God is your peace - and in the quiet place at the still point within you there is a peace-power that can not only keep you in poise and tranquillity, but through which you can be a great influence for peace in the world.

These are the five points of the star of Bethlehem...your Christmas star! They can point the way to the Christmas Consciousness.

It is not a star to wish upon...for actually we need no star "out there"...and actually we live on a star, which means that all the infinite possibilities are already around and within you. And we do not need to read our destiny in the stars. Our destiny depends on how we live on this star. The Christmas star is an inner light, the candle of the Lord. It is in the East which means within. Follow the star and it will lead you to the manger place within where there is an unborn possibility of limitless living. You have the privilege of -giving birth to it...today, and every day. And whenever you do, even to the slightest degree, in the slightest display of love-giving...that day is Christmas.

The words the angels spoke to the shepherds watching their flocks on the hills of Judea, "There is born to you this day...a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."

"This Day" is the acceptable time with Spirit, the day in which all its work is done. Now is the time. And the birth of the Christ must take place anew every day of your life.

Thus, Christmas is not just a day for rejoicing, it is an opportunity for being that which you were created to be/

Plato: "We must wait for someone to be a god, or a god-inspired man, who will teach us our duties, and take away the darkness from our eyes."

Christmas is the brilliant reflection of the highest facet of the nature of man. Even as our days are made of noonday and midnight and various degrees of light and darkness between, so man, in his evolving spirituality, contains various levels of consciousness from the darkness of limitation to the radiant light of his inherent divinity. CHRISTMAS IS MAN AT HIGH NOON WITH HIS BEST LIGHT SHINING.

Emerson once said, "We must be as courteous to a man as we are to a picture, which we are willing to give the advantage of a good light." Christmas is seeing every person in the best light.

Contagious of the Christmas consciousness. War story that has become classic, though it is reputed to be quite authentic in its original form. It happened some 60 years ago during the first World War. No one knows exactly how it happened, but suddenly out in no-man's land a peculiar Christmas celebration took place on the morning of December 25th. It was a spontaneous and certainly undeclared armistice, where German and Allied soldiers exchanged gifts of cigarettes, soap, sausages, etc, and sang Christmas carols and mingled cordially with one another all along the line -- one of the oddest peace conventions the earth ever saw. Then men who had been trying to kill each other for months, now of a sudden were exchanging smiles and greetings - communicating in the Universal language of love.

Ancient words of prophet Isaiah - used as personal covenant:

"UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN, UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN, AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDERS...AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED...WONDERFUL, COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE."

Perhaps you have been trying to carry the government on your shoulders. You are a child of God, with an eternal relationship...you can really "cast your burden on the Lord" (law).

"AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED..." This is more than a prophecy. It is a command, a directive. Decree for yourself an identification with the great synonyms that Isaiah sets forth:

WONDERFUL -- You are wonderful. Claim it. You are full of wonder...a true wonder child.

COUNSELOR - You are one with the guidance principle...you have an advocate...you have the wise counsel of the Presence that always knows your needs ~~xx~~ ^{and} is the readily available answer.

MIGHTY GOD - God in you is omnipotent. Things may threaten you from without, but the power of God indwelling and ever with you is equal to any threat.

EVERLASTING FATHER - This establishes your relationship in unmistakable terms. God is your Father and you are His son...forever in spiritual Unity. Always, and not just when you are praying that this is what he is supposed to be.

PRINCE OF PEACE -- God is your peace - and in the quiet place at the heart of you, there is a dynamic peace power that can not only keep you in poise and tranquillity, but through which you can be a mighty influence for peace in the world.

(FIVE POINTS OF THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM) The Christmas star!

Luke tells the story of pastoral simplicity, a story of men of faith and vision - shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch by night over their flock, of an angel of the Lord standing by them, filling them with fear. The angel spoke to them, "Be not afraid: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people; for there is born to you this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." And then there was a great host of heavenly voices praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased." And the shepherds decided to go to -see the thing that had happened, and they came and worshipped.

The story of Matthew outstanding in another way. It is a story with grandeur and regal splendor, the story of and perhaps for men of wisdom, men of intellect. It tells of three wise men, sometimes called three Kings, who came from the East to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him." And they followed the star and came to where the young child was. And they rejoiced and fell down and worshipped Him, and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

This, then, is the night of nights. The story of stories. What child can't retell it. And yet what adult can understand it in terms of meaning for our time. What relationship does it have to a status-seeking, conformity ridden observant of Christmas.

For one thing the two versions tell of men - simple shepherds and royal wise men - who are captivated by an idea. Can you still be enthused about such an occurrence.

The greatest thing about life is living, and to live is to keep alive the sense of wonder, romance, and expectancy. When we lose this feeling, something important goes out of us, and from that time on we never quite live again.

How sad to see the questing spirit of vision fade away:

"The youth who daily far from the East
Must travel, still is Nature's priest;
And on his way attended by the Vision Splendid,
At length the man perceives it die away
And fade into the light of common day." (Wordsworth)

This was not true of the shepherds or the Magi from the East. They may have been old men, but they still possessed the sense of wonder and awe that belongs to the little child. The shepherds said, "Let us go and see this thing that has come to pass." And the wise men were still chasing stars at seventy.

As Ruskin once wrote: "I WOULD FAR RATHER LIVE IN A COTTAGE AND WONDER AT EVERYTHING, THAN TO LIVE IN WARWICK CASTLE AND WONDER AT NOTHING."

We need to be searching the heavens for the Christmas star (Chesterton - we live on a star)

Christmas should not be a backward glance, but a forward look. It is a prophetic day, or should be. The birth of the Christ belongs to an order of life not yet attained, a glimpse of a race of men yet to be.