

**ERIC BUTTERWORTH  
PAPERS (3014)**

**BOX 23**

**FOLDER 11**

**CHRISTMAS**

**CELEBRATES YOU**

**DECEMBER 21, 1986**

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATES YOU

12/21/86

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 HEART OF MAN  
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 NIGH  
-- ANGELA MORGAN --

THE SIGHT AND SOUNDS AND SMELL OF CHRISTMAS/ARE  
IN THE AIR./ IT IS A MAGIC TIME./..THE SINGING OF  
CAROLS,/THE TRIMMING OF THE TREE,/THE CANDLE-  
LIGHT AND TINSEL,/THE ~~SPRIGS~~ SPRIGS OF MISTLETOE,/THE  
GREAT TREE AT 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 SHEPHERDS./..AND THE STAR <sup>EAST</sup>

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL LITTLE PLACE THAT PRIDED ITSELF ON ITS PEACEFUL ATMOSPHERE. TWO CENTURIES LATER IT HAD BECOME A HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE. IT BECAME A PLACE OF DISORDER AND DISCORDANT NOISES. THROUGH THE YEARS THE NAME BETHLEHEM IN DIALECT BECAME <sup>BETHLEH</sup> 'BEDLAM'. AND NOW, WHEN WE THINK OF NOISE OR CONFUSION, WE SAY 'THE PLACE WAS A BEDLAM.'

AND SOMETIMES I WONDER, // WHEN WE KEEP THE FORM BUT FORGET THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS, // IF IT DOES NOT BECOME LITTLE MORE THAN A 'BEDLAM' - AS IT DETERIORATES, // LIKE THE WORD, // FROM THE BEAUTIFUL SYMBOL OF THE BETHLEHEM STORY.

---

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE -- CHRISTMAS IS AN ETERNAL SYMBOL OF LIGHT AND JOY AND PEACE AND LOVE -- A SYMBOL OF THE REBIRTH OF THE BETTER SELF OF THE PERSON. EVEN THE MOST HARDENED INDIVIDUAL HAS SOMETHING <sup>SOFT THOUGHTS</sup> GODD COMING TO THE FORE AT THIS TIME

AT OTHER TIMES SOME PEOPLE EMPHASIZE DESPAIR AND GLOOM, CRYING OUT, 'LOOK WHAT THE WORLD IS COMING TO.' BUT AT CHRISTMASTIME, THERE IS A TENDENCY TO EMPHASIZE INSTEAD, 'LOOK WHAT HAS COME INTO THE WORLD!' (!)

USUALLY, BEFORE WE ARE FAR INTO THE SEASON WE HEAR TALK OF THE COMMERCIALISM OF CHRISTMAS. BUT WHO CAN KNOW WHAT CHAIN REACTION MAY START//IN THE ONENESS OF JOSTLING CROWDS//ALL BENT ON FINDING WAYS OF GIVING,//OR FROM THE TOOTLING OF A SALVATION ARMY BAND,//OR EVEN FROM THE TINNY CAROLS COMING OVER THE PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM IN BLOOMINGDALES? LOST AS IT MAY SEEM WITHIN THE PREOCCUPATION WITH TRIVIA,//THE GREAT ENERGY OF SPIRIT IS WITHIN THE CHRISTMAS THEME,//AND AT THIS TIME OF THE YEAR,//COMMERCIALISM AND ALL,//WE ARE CLOSER TO 'PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN',//THAN AT ANY OTHER TIME OF OUR LIVES.

IT IS AS IT HAS BEEN FOR RELIGION GENERALLY/-  
WHERE THE SPIRIT HAS BEEN BURIED IN FORM,/ AND  
THE/ TRUTH LIES UNDISCOVERED/ THROUGH THE PERPETUA-  
TION OF DOGMA./ SO THE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION HAS  
DEVOLVED FOR SO MANY/ INTO WHAT PHILIP WYLIE  
CALLS ~~THE~~ HOPPED-UP,/ PRESSURE-LADEN,/ STATUS-  
SEEKING,/ COMPETITIVE DEGRADATION OF CHRISTMAS.."

---

NOW LET ME SAY./ I BELIEVE IN CHRISTMAS,/ AND I  
NEVER FIND IT DIFFICULT/ TO ERECT THE FACADE YEAR  
AFTER YEAR,/ OR TO ENGAGE IN THE FULL BROAD RANGE  
OF CHRISTMAS MAGIC./ BUT I THINK, FOR ME,/ THE  
REASON THE INVOLVEMENT COMES EASY/ AND WITH A  
CONSTANTLY RENEWED ENTHUSIASM/ IS THAT I REMIND  
MYSELF THERE IS SOMETHING SO MUCH MORE THAN THE  
FACADE INVOLVED. *DEEPER, RICHER, MORE TRANSCENDENT*

IT IS LIKE ~~AN UNCOVERING~~ UNCOVERING ~~A~~ ROAD  
MARKER./ IT IS INTENDED TO POINT TO SOMETHING,/   
BUT IT LOSES ITS MEANING/ IF WE SLAVISHLY ERECT

THE MARKER YEAR AFTER YEAR/WITH NO ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW ITS DIRECTION./ JESUS SAID, 'FOLLOW ME', 'NOT WORSHIP ME!' AS ~~THE~~ ORIENTALS SAY,/'THE TEACHER POINTS TO THE TRUTH./..THE STUDENT WORSHIPS THE POINTER.'/IN OTHER WORDS THE CHRISTMAS FACADE IS NOT AN END,/BUT A POINTER SUGGESTING A JOURNEY *IN CONSCIOUSNESS*.

IF ~~THE~~ CHIEF REASON FOR DOING WHAT WE DO AT CHRISTMAS/IS THAT WE HAVE ALWAYS DONE IT./..THEN THE 'ALWAYS'/IS VERITABLY IMPRINTED ON THE BAUBLES/AND DECORATIONS/AND COLORFUL PARAPHERNALIA/THAT WE CAREFULLY PACK AWAY IN DUSTY ATTICS/TO ~~B~~E RETRIEVED EACH SUCCEEDING SEASON/AS WE DUTIFULLY AND SOMETIMES/WEARILY SUCCUMB TO THE ANNUAL FEVER.

---

ONE MAY FEEL THAT IT IS A MATTER/OF BEING LOYAL TO A TIME-HONORED TRADITION,/ALMOST AS IF IT WERE LIKE A 'GREAT HISTORIC CREED'/OF RELIGION.

▶ DID YOU KNOW THAT THE OBSERVANCE OF CHRISTMAS AS  
A HOLIDAY WAS NOT ESTABLISHED IN AMERICA UNTIL  
THE LAST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY? DOES THAT  
SURPRISE YOU?

~~AND EVEN MORE~~, DID YOU KNOW THAT THE EARLY  
PILGRIMS NOT ONLY FROWNED UPON A SEASON OF  
'MAKING MERRY' BUT THAT IT WAS AGAINST THE LAW?  
/ IN 1659 THE COLONY OF MASS. / PASSED A LAW THAT  
◉ READ, / 'WHOSOEVER SHALL BE FOUND OBSERVING ANY  
SUCH DAY AS CHRISTMAS / EITHER BY FORBEARING OF  
LABOR, / FEASTING, OR IN ANY OTHER WAY, / SHALL BE  
FINED FIVE SHILLINGS.'

// FOR MANY YEARS PEOPLE WHO / REFUSED TO WORK ON  
CHRISTMAS / EITHER WENT TO JAIL / OR PAID FINES /

AND LOOK AT US NOW!

---

◉ ASK THE QUESTION, 'WHAT DOES CHRISTMAS MEAN?'/  
AND THE AVERAGE PERSON, / IF HE CAN GET OUT OF  
THE SANTA CLAUS SYNDROME FOR A MNUTE, / MIGHT

SAY, 'CHRISTMAS 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 HISTORICAL RECORD OF ANY OF THE EARLY LIFE OF JESUS, / ONLY A VARIETY OF CONFLICTING LEGENDS. / THE FACT IS. / WE REALLY DON'T KNOW WHEN JESUS WAS BORN. / NOR DO WE KNOW VERY MUCH ABOUT THE CIRCUMSTANCES. / NOT EVEN THE SEASON OF THE YEAR IS CERTAIN. / THE DATE, DEC. 25TH, 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. / SATURN WAS THE OLD MAN WHO LIVES AT THE NORTH POLE, / WHO CAME TO THE CHILDREN WITH A SPRIG OF EVERGREEN (THE CHRISTMAS TREE), AND WHO OBVIOUSLY IS THE PAGAN FIGURE THAT LED TO SANTA CLAUS.

▶ DURING THE ROMAN SATURNALIA THERE WAS A FESTIVE  
CELEBRATION, / LASTING SEVEN DAYS, / HOUSES WERE  
DECORATED WITH LAURELS AND EVERGREENS, / PRESENTS  
WERE EXCHANGED, / AND GAMES WERE PLAYED, / WORK WAS  
SUSPENDED, / SCHOOLS WERE CLOSED, / NO PUNISHMENTS  
WERE INFLICTED, / AND NO WARS WERE FOUGHT, / DOLL  
FAIRS WERE HELD, / AND TOYS WERE GIVEN TO CHILDREN  
„, SO YOU SEE, / ~~IT WAS~~ WHEN THE CHRISTIAN AND ROMAN  
WORLD WERE UNITED, / THE CHRISTIANS SIMPLY ABSORBE  
THE ROMAN TRADITIONS.

THIS IS A MATTER OF RECORD -  
NO MATTER THAT FUNDAMENTALISTS  
MAY DENY IT.

➤ SCHOLARS NOW SAY THERE WAS AN ERROR, / IN COMPU-  
TING THE YEAR OF JESUS' BIRTH, / THAT IT WAS  
PROBABLY FOUR OR FIVE YEARS EARLIER, / SO IF  
ANNO DOMINI ('THE YEAR OF OUR LORD') FIXES  
THE CALENDAR TO BEGIN WITH THE BIRTH OF JESUS,  
WE MAY NOW BE COMING TO THE CLOSE OF 1990, / AND  
WITH THE NEW YEAR USHERING IN 1991.

IRRELEVANCE MEANINGLESSNESS OF TIME AS  
TRUTH

▶ EVERY YEAR CHRISTIAN PURISTS AND FUNDAMENTALISTS STRIKE UP THE REFRAIN, / 'LET'S PUT CHRIST BACK INTO CHRISTMAS! / IT IS REMINISCENT OF THE STORY OF TWO WOMEN / LOOKING AT A BEAUTIFUL CRÉCHE IN A FIFTH AVENUE STORE WINDOW. / ONE OF THEM SAID, 'JUST LOOK AT THAT' / THE <sup>CHURCH IS</sup> ~~MEMBERS~~ ~~ARE~~ EVEN TRYING TO TAKE OVER CHRISTMAS!'

▶ IT IS OFTEN SAID THAT CHRISTMAS IS TOO COMMERCIAL BUT COMMERCIALISM IS NOT WHAT IS WRONG WITH CHRISTMAS. / IT IS STILL COMMERCE / WHETHER IT IS THE MANUFACTURE AND SALE OF BIBLES OR BAUBLES.

IF THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH CHRISTMAS / IT IS NOT MATERIALISM. / BUT A FALSE RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT. THE THREE WISE MAN, / THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM, / AND THE BABE IN THE MANGER, / THE MYSTERY AND THE MIRACLE. / 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 APPEARS TOTALLY  
IRRELEVANT TO OURS.

<sup>So</sup>  
~~AND~~ WE CAN ENGAGE IN IT,/USE THE THEME FOR  
DECORATIONS,/SING THE CAROLS,/DRAMATIZE THE  
STORIES,/PASTE THE WHOLE GLITTERING SPECTACLE  
AS A FACADE OVER OUR LIVES,/.AND NOT REALLY  
GET INVOLVED IN IT./

THE WHOLE STORY OF THE 'LITTLE 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-  
NESS,/.NOT THE LEAST BIT CHANGED BY THE EXPE-  
RIENCE.

---

SINCE IT IS NOW BELIEVED BY BIBLE SCHOLARS/THAT  
THE TWO GOSPELS THAT TELL THE LEGENDS OF CHRISTMAS:  
: MATTHEW TELLING OF <sup>WISE MEN OF THE EAST</sup> ~~WISDOMEN AND SHEPHERDS~~  
~~AND~~,/AND LUKE TELLING OF SHEPHERDS OF THE FIELD

WERE WRITTEN A GOOD FIFTY YEARS AFTER THE TIME  
OF ~~THE~~ BIRTH, / AND QUITE OBVIOUSLY USING THE  
ACCOUNT OF MARK, <sup>WHICH WAS</sup> WRITTEN SOON AFTER THE ~~DATE~~  
<sup>LIFE TIME OF JESUS</sup> ~~OF THE BIRTH~~, / SURPRISINGLY MARK MAKES NO MENTION  
OF THESE LEGENDS AT ALL. *NOTHING OF JESUS' BIRTH.*

SO THE COLORFUL STORY OF CHRISTMAS / IS UNDOUBT-  
EDLY A HIGHLY IDEALIZED ACCOUNT, / INTENDED TO  
BE SYMBOLIC OF A MOVEMENT IN CONSCIOUSNESS. /  
DEALING WITH THE BIRTH / OF THE CHRIST IDEA IN  
HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS: / THE WISE MEN INDICATING  
THE AWA~~RE~~NESS COMING THROUGH THE INTELLECT,  
AND THE SHEPHERDS IN THE FIELD / INDICATING THE  
PERCEPTION COMING THROUGH INTUITION AND FEELING  
EVEN THE STORY OF MARY AND JOSEPH RIDING INTO  
BETHLEHEM ON A DONKEY. / . AND "THERE WAS NO ROOM IN  
THE INN," SO SHE GAVE BIRTH TO HER FIRST-BORN  
SON / AND LAID HIM IN A MANGER. / . IS A HIGHLY ROMAN-  
TICIZED LEGEND / WITH A BEAUTIFUL PERSONALLY SYM-

BOLIC MEANING/DEALING WITH THE AWAKENING IN US  
TOF OUR DIVINE DIMENSION.

AND AS A SIDELIGHT,/SO MANY SERMONS HAVE BEEN  
PREACHED ABOUT THE INNKEEPER/WHO HAS BECOME  
THE CLASSIC SYMBOL OF THE COUEL,/HARD-HEARTED,  
MATERIALISTIC MERCHANT,/WHO COULDN'T FIND ROOM  
FOR THE 'BIRTH OF A KING.'/ ACTUALLY THAT SUP-  
POSED INN WAS NOT A/HOWARD JOHNSON MOTEL TO  
BE FOUND ON THE HIGHWAY./ IT WAS LITTLE MORE  
THAN A PROTECTIVE ENCLAVE,<sup>KHAR</sup> WHERE TRAVELERS  
COULD FIND REFUGE/FROM THE PERILS OF WILD  
ANIMALS AND THIEVES.<sup>SLIPPED ON GRASS</sup> MARY AND JOSEPH FOUND<sup>THE PIONEERS</sup> REFUGE<sup>ORIGINALLY HERE</sup> IN A CAVE ON THE NEARBY HILLS,/ QUITE  
POSSIBLY LED THERE BY THE VERY INNKEEPER/WHO  
HAS BEEN FOR SO LONG PILLORIED/AS HARD-HEARTED.

---

SO YOU SEE WE KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT JESUS/BIRTH  
OR THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING IT,/ AND WHEN WE  
UNDERSTAND HIS MISSION,/IT IS REALLY NOT ALL THAT  
/IMPORTANT

SOON YOU WILL DISSEMBLE THE FAÇADE AND PACK AWAY  
THE COLORFUL PARAPHERNALIA. BUT THE TRUE CELE-  
BRATION THAT IS CHRISTMAS HAS JUST BEGUN. IF YOU  
HAVE EXPERIENCED, EVEN FOR A MOMENT, THE TRUE  
HAPPENING, THEN YOU HAVE DISCOVERED THAT YOU CAN  
REMOVE THE MASK AND BE YOUR TRUE SELF. YOU WILL  
FIND IT PROGRESSIVELY EASIER TO BE LOVING, FOR-  
GIVING, PATIENT, AND PEACEFUL. MAY EVERY DAY OF  
1984 BE A CELEBRATION OF YOUR TRUE SELF.

---

' IF EVERY DAY WERE CHRISTMAS,  
HOW DIFFERENT LIFE WOULD BE,  
IF NOT ONE DAY BUT ALL THE YEAR  
WERE RULED BY CHARITY.

HAD WE THE FAITH IN MIRACLES  
A CHILD HAS//CHRISTMAS MORN,  
EACH DAY WOULD BE LOVE'S MANGER  
AND CHRIST WOULD BE REBORN,

IN US AGAIN TO CHANGE AND HEAL  
OUR OUTWORN WARS AND WAYS -  
HAD WE A CHILD'S OR SHEPHERDS GIFT  
FOR WONDERMENT AND PRAISE!

YET EVERY DAY IS CHRISTMAS  
WHEN WE HAVE LEARNED TO LIVE  
BY LOVE'S LAW, LEARNED NOT HOW TO GET  
BUT ONLY HOW TO GIVE:

AND LIKE A CHILD CAN WONDER...  
AND LIKE A CHILD CAN PRAY,  
BUT HAVE THE GROWN UP WISDOM  
TO GIVE OURSELVES AWAY.'

MERRY LOVE-GIVING!