

Yule and Noel: The Saga of Christmas

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1

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2

**YULE AND NOEL
The Birthday of Humanity**

Could any statement fall on the mind of the general reader with greater astonishment and incredulity than the assertion here and now to be made that while everybody has celebrated the great festival of Christmas year after year for some seventeen centuries, nobody truly and profoundly knows what it means? It is questionable whether a single person could be found today who would be able to give a sound and supportable elucidation of the significance of the traditional rites and celebratory customs connected with the annual observance of the solstitial holiday. In millions of homes the head of the household, with suppressed anticipation of delight, drags into the house a green pine tree and in happy mood labors late into the night of December twenty-fourth to decorate it with shining baubles and gifts. Yet it is safe to say that not in centuries has a single one of these celebrants entertained the remotest idea of the origin and inner meaning of his customary procedure. It is done because it has become fixed in the communal mind as traditional routine. Few even pause to wonder how or why the several usages have come to prevail, and would be surprised if some one raised the question. Now and again a newspaper article will venture to relate the origin of one or another customary feature, but cloaks the account in uncertainty and conjecture. The symbolism of the pine tree, the mistletoe and the Yule log traces back, it will say, to Celtic or Nordic provenance, but as to vouchsafing any authentic intelligence as to the inner significance of the rites mentioned, it makes little pretence at knowledge. It is

3

necessary to add that in such attempts to throw some light on ancient customs connected with the festival most of the explanation advanced falls wide of the mark of truth.

If question was asked why the Christmas pine tree is trimmed with bright objects, or why a gold star is usually hung atop the highest branch, there would be complete innocence and a blank stare. If it was inquired why the two strongly contrasted colors of red and green were universally accepted as traditionally appropriate to the festival, similar default of knowledge would be encountered. Even the practice of presenting the Yuletide gifts to family members and friends is not too clear to the average person, although there is a hazy impression that it somehow is connected with the sentiment of God's great gift of his Son to redeem mankind. It would be asking far too much explicit question why the Norse and the Anglo-Saxons at an earlier time used to drag in and burn the Yule log on the old-time hearth, and why they scattered parched wheat upon the doorstep or the hearth-stone of the house. Equally vain would it be to ask why they suspended a twig of mistletoe under which lovers might steal a kiss. And what the significance of the candle set in the window to send its tiny gleam abroad in the dark night of December? Perhaps some one might venture the explanation that it symbolized the light brought to the world by the birth of the Christ, to shed his benignant rays upon a benighted humanity.

4

IS CHRISTMAS A CHRISTIAN FESTIVAL?

For centuries in Western countries Christmas has been proclaimed to be a purely Christian celebration, commemorating the birth of the Christ, the Savior of mankind, in ancient Judea. Yet so stolid and unthinking are the masses that it has hardly ever entered the brain of one in millions that practically nothing connected with the observance is in any way distinctly Christian except the one item of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. The Christian religion has over these many centuries berated and flouted the Pagan world and its religions. Yet the odd truth is that here in its most colorful festival of the year the Christian world is found perpetuating the celebratory rites and traditional practices of that same Pagan system that it traduces. Encyclopedias and apologetic writing in the Christian world have to be content to say that this is due to the fact that as Christianity spread over the northern Teutonic and Nordic lands of Europe, it insensibly commingled its own ideas with the ineradicable customs of the new converts in those countries. Instead of ousting completely the religious routine and addictions of the peoples it had newly won over, it had to be satisfied to make a blending of its basic Christology with the ritual usages of the nations it overspread without uprooting these from their native hold on these people. In short it graciously condescended to allow its Pagan converts to continue undisturbed in the grooves of hereditary custom, aiming the while to read a Christian meaning into those survivals of the olden time and such early religions as the Druidic.

This is the common belief, the general understanding. How far it falls short of the truth will constitute

5

the astounding revelation of this brochure. So far from its being true that Christianity captured Paganism in its Christmas institution, the fact of history is that as regards the mode of the

Christmas celebration, it was Paganism that captured Christianity. For the astounding truth about the matter is that the entire body of meaning foisted upon the festival by Christianity has missed the mark of true significance by many a mile, while for a comprehension of the primordial motives expressed in and by the ritual and symbolical customs and rites, we have to go back to the mysteries of occult Pagan formulations. To the substantiation of this epochal pronouncement the present essay will be dedicated.

This declaration virtually asserts that Christmas finds its true and more potent spiritual significance for us when treated as a Pagan rather than as a Christian ordination. The inferences from this deduction are not dodged. They will be openly accepted and confirmed in their general correctness. The claim is here advanced that not through Christian but through Pagan forms of celebration and channels of understanding does this great solstitial ceremony derive its highest moving and uplifting moral and spiritual power. Christianity has diverted the true original meaning off into dead-end by-paths. This has happened because it has lost the underlying sense of the Pagan formulations. The sad result is that nobody in Christian lands has the dimmest conception of the true significance of the striking rituals and symbols that still prevail to mark this as the most cherished festival of the Christian year. This is a strange and anomalous phenomenon indeed.

6

CHRISTMAS ON MARCH 25.

In the first place there is the matter of the date, the year, month and day of the anniversary and the celebration. In all Christian understanding the assumption is that Christmas commemorates the birth of the infant Jesus at a given place and hour. It is perhaps well enough known that the exact time of this event is not a matter of historical record, and therefore the anniversary character of the celebration is hardly any longer considered. It is kept in the dark background of silence because to agitate it opens the door to scores of pertinent questions for which religionists have no authentic answers. The twenty-fifth day of December is accepted now as a *token* date of the birth, though few even pause to wonder any more what led to the selection of this date, if it is not to be held to be the actual birthday of the Galilean Messiah.

In the case of a festival of such importance and prominence as Christmas, it is a thing of no light insignificance that the Christian Church keeps from its people the simple and singular fact that the early Christians celebrated the birth of their Savior for over the first three and a half centuries on *March 25*. It is to be questioned whether its clergy are generally aware of this fact definitely and succinctly. It would involve the revelation of their faith's early kinship with Paganism. It is therefore kept from publicity. But the words of the decree issued by the Pope of Christendom, Julian II, in the year 345 A.D., are still to be read, and they inform us that in that year he decreed that henceforth it was fitting that the followers of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, *should unite with the followers of Mithra and of Bacchus* in celebrating the rebirth of the deity under

7

solar symbolism at the winter solstice! Here again it is historically established that even the day and date of the Christmas event was not an original Christian institution, but was an

accommodation of Christian practice to Pagan observance. In this same decree it is logically established that the date is not set as an anniversary commemoration, since the only consideration governing its selection is astrological symbolism! No pretence is made that it is to be regarded as the natal day of the Son of God in human body.

Surely it is of first importance to inquire why, before Pope Julian's decree, Christian practice had set the celebration of the Savior's birth on March 25. Here, too, the dominant motives are found to be primarily astrological. March brings the vernal equinox, and the most moving dramatic rituals of the ancient Pagan religion were consummated on or about March 21, the date of the sun's crossing northward over the equatorial meridian. Annually at this epoch every allegorical representation of the aeonial cycle of soul's involvement in matter and body came to final stage and to victory with the sun's ascent out of the darkness of winter, typifying the soul's resurrection out from under the thralldom of "death" in mortal bodies. This was in fact the final and climactic act in the drama of the birth of the Son of God from out its material womb of flesh. Hence it came to be regarded in Pagan modes of pictorializing spiritual processes as the true birth of spirit, the conception having taken place back on September 21 and the "quickening" from "death" having occurred on December 21,--all in zodiacal symbolism.

As the advent of the human child from the mother's womb is as virtually a resurrection as any readily conceivable, so the resurrection symbolized by the passing over the line of division between heaven (spirit) and

8

earth (matter) by the sun on March 21 could just as permissibly be classified as a birth. Every birth is a resurrection, every resurrection a new birth. It requires no special genius to poetize the vernal equinox as the birthday of the sun of spring, and, following solar symbolism, the birthday of the spiritual or deific "sun" in the constitution of man. Hence on the pattern of nature symbolism March 21 was held to be the birthday of the Messiah. From the first the Christians had joined with the Pagans in commemorating at the equinox of spring a festival called Lady's Day, outwardly in honor of nature's rebirth from the universal Mother Earth, esoterically in token of the rebirth of "dead" spiritual consciousness according to the inner teachings of the Mysteries. The Christians thus celebrated it for almost three and a half centuries, an exceptional item of no slight historical significance. The statement to this effect is made by Clement of Alexandria and others of the early Christian writers. It is confirmed by the Julian decree. It can be affirmed, then, that the Christian celebration of the festival on December 25 dates from the year 345 A.D.

But why the twenty-fifth days of March and December, and not the twenty-first (or twenty-second)? Here is a question which, as far as general knowledge goes, has found no authoritative answer.

The reason is to be found, no doubt, in the peculiarity of ancient celebratory custom. It is in fact the same reason which prescribed the mythical "three days" in which the Son of God lay in the tomb between death and resurrection. "As Jonas was three days and nights in the belly of the whale, so must the Son of Man be three days in the bowels of the earth." These three "days" of the incarnational immersion of spirit in the three kingdoms of matter, mineral, vegetable and ani-

mal, were held to be of such major significance in the ritualism of archaic religion that many of the more important festivals commemorating the soul's crucial experiences in the flesh were instituted as three-day ceremonies, the first day marking the entry of soul into matter's domain, and the third day consummating its rising out of that realm of "death." In Old Testament prophecies, it was again and again stated that we would rise out of the tomb of "death" in these physical bodies "on the third day." As *Hosea* (6:2) has it: "Come let us return unto the Lord: for he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." After spending three "days and nights," or periods of incubation and release, in the three lower kingdoms of nature, spirit-soul would awaken from its aeonial submergence in the dark unconsciousness of matter and come to its birth into more expanded being in the mind and heart of mankind. So the Gospel allegory represented the Christ as emerging from the boat and walking forth on the water (the body is seven-eighths water!) to save his disciples from sinking in the sea "in the fourth watch of the night." Incarnation has always been symbolized as the night-time and the winter-time of the soul, its light and life, like the sun's, going "dead" in the coldness and darkness of matter.

Hence at all the four cardinal points of the zodiac, June, September, December and March, the great ceremonial festivals were set at three days length, beginning on the twenty-first or twenty-second of the month, and culminating three days later on the twenty-fifth, or "after three days."

It has been indicated that the early Christians who commemorated the Savior's birth on March twenty-fifth

were not in reality totally misconceiving the significance of the festival appropriate to that date. Even more cogently than Christmas, Easter *is* the birthday of the Christ grade of sentient being. The distinction between the commemorative values of the two dates is to be found in the allegorical picturing of the Christ's development at the two emblematic seasons. On December twenty-fifth the Christ is born as an infant. Not having been here before, he then makes his first appearance in the life of animal humanity, or has his first awakening in the womb of body. As a new-born power he is yet the undeveloped potential of Christliness, the babe in swaddling clothes, the princeling, the king-to-be. He is germinally, seminally, the King of Glory.

But in March he has become a full-grown deity, the king on his throne wielding all the fulness of his divine prerogative in the life of man. The Christ-child has matured into fulness of the stature of the nature of God, the infant deity has deployed into expression the total possibility of his deific genius. To summarize it tersely, he is in December the Christ awakened *in* the womb of matter; in March he is the Christ awakened *out of* the womb of matter. In one he is the babe; in the other the man-Christ, exercising complete lordship over the physical life of his body.

Indeed, in the true sense of a birth, Christmas is less the birth-time than it is the time of what was called the "quickenings." St. Paul in particular uses this word to intimate the rise in consciousness of the dynamic potencies of the Christ nature. This was a natural form of typism drawn from the

structure of zodiacal symbology that was universally used in the esoteric science of the ancient day. Likening the descent of the soul into matter to the falling direction and decreasing power of the sun from June to December, the symbologists of old

11

figured the birth of the divine sun-of-soul at the December solstice, following upon its conception in the cosmic mind at the June solstice. Descending from the June point of generation in God-mind, it entered into matter at the September equinox, which would signalize its physical conception in Mother Nature's womb. From September 21 on to March it endured its embodiment in matter, its period of incubation or gestation preparatory to its ultimate birth at Easter. But from September on down to December it plunged deeper and deeper into the darkness of bodily "imprisonment." It lost daily to the powers of matter, growing more inert, the spiritual awareness sinking into a sleep or coma as it was progressively submerged under the dominance of the flesh. In this its deepest immersion in matter all ancient allegorism depicted the Christos as lying inert in "death." From this aeonial "death" its resurrection would come at Easter, its preliminary quickening at Christmas.

The significant item of this dramatism is that at the December solstice the sun-of-soul halts its descent and stands for a time balanced and equilibrated with the powers of matter. The inertia of matter, offering resistance to the energies of spirit, brings the downward movement of soul into matter to a full stop, and for the period of the solstice holds it immovable in its embrace. It is at this point and in this stabilized condition that the soul of the spiritual energy which has gone "dead" in matter is suddenly "quickened" out of its torpid state and feels the first touch of its awakening to birth for a new cycle of growth. Having "descended into hell," (as the creed has it) he now awakes to an incipient awareness of his position and the consciousness of his new-born strength. That which lay buried in the *tomb* of "death" is now quickened in its *womb* of new birth. And as a mother-to-be suddenly feels the stirring of the

12

embryonic babe within her, so Mother Matter feels the same stirring of new-born mind and the Christly impulse within her domain. As St. Paul so strikingly puts it, "All the creation groans and travails in pain until now, waiting for the manifestation of the Sons of God."

Christmas at the winter solstice then memorializes this quickening of the foetal Christ within the heart, mind and soul of humanity. It stages a festival of rejoicing at the knowledge that in the circuit of alternate involution and evolution, the deific solar power of Christliness, making its round of descent into the body and return, has ended the long period of its lifeless insensibility as mere seed of divinity in the soil of mortal body, is now quickened out of its spell of "death" and awakened to the glorious conquest of life in a new cycle of growth. The season thus commemorates the birth to activity of the Christ-mind in the nature and body of mankind. It is to be remembered always that it is only the *birth* of that Christ-mind, the deific power in its infancy, in its first unsure reachings and gropings amidst the strong elemental surges of the irrational and passional nature of the flesh. But it is no longer lifeless, inert, speechless, dumb and blind, as ancient symbolism pictured it in this condition. It is awakened to catch the sense of

events and the significance of experience. It is ready to respond in ever increasing intelligence to the impacts of environment and sensuous life, and drain out of them their moral value for its perfection.

This delineation is of crucial importance for general comprehension and for its psychological beneficence, because a very faulty conception of the "birth of Christ" and the "coming of Messiah" has widely ingrained the bland assumption that by the alleged historical event of Bethlehem birth the Christ influence has indeed been injected into the body and soul of human life. All

13

ancient presupposition that centered upon the Messianic fulfilment contemplated the immediate spiritualization and transfiguration of the world's elan and morale upon this postulated advent of the only-born Son of God. This opinion has altered but little in the succeeding time to the present. Vague Christian belief credits this "birth of Christ" with bringing the first true light to shine in heathen darkness, and credulously propagates the legend that the world has been elevated to higher level of righteousness and spirituality as a result of this event of two thousand years ago.

14

THE ADVENT AT THE SOLSTICE

A more competent envisagement of the symbolic intimations, however, accentuates the thesis that what is celebrated at Christmas is but the first awakening of that Christ power that slept within the confines of the mortal nature until the turn of the cycle at the solstitial point of evolution. In the first chapter of *I Samuel* it is said of Hannah, who, like Sarah and Elizabeth, was to bear the Christ-child in her old age, that "at the turn of the year she bore her son." Mother Nature gives birth to the Messianic consciousness at the turn of the cycle of the aeonial "year," where involution comes to a halt and after the period of solstitial motionlessness swings around as on a pivot and takes initial new direction upward toward evolution. But human fancy has not been sharp enough to preserve the subtle distinction between the occult sense of the soul's "quickening" out of its antecedent "death" and its "birth" as an active power in the world. What might be called a confusion of tropes has come in to befuddle common understanding. There are several senses in which the "quickening" may be conceived as the Christ's "birth." It is by no means inappropriate to think of the cosmic event signalized by the Christmas allegorism as the birth of the Christ, if one is schooled to moderate the conception with the knowledge that the Christ motivation is under Yuletide symbolism conceived as only at the inception of its objective kingship in history, and that only the lives of humans individually and collectively will set the Prince of Peace on the throne of human life in the world.

As said, all expectation of Messiah's coming in the ancient world envisaged the immediate transfiguration of humanity by divine grace and the near beatification of world history by the cosmic event. How egregiously

15

fallacious and irrational this high anticipation has been can now be seen in historical retrospect from the present. Not only did the proclaimed birth of Christ by the Christian movement not make the slightest appreciable change in the tone and character of mundane history at the time (indeed it seems not even to have been heard of for close to two hundred years after its declared incidence), but the record of history for the two thousand years since the great divine oblation, and more particularly as manifested in and among the nations blessed with the message of that Redeemer, is one whose blackness and shocking inhumanity exceeds anything of the kind in all world annals of the past. History in effect enforces the conclusion that the coming of Messiah in the form of a historical birth, so far from inaugurating in the world an epoch of light, peace and charity among nations, has been followed by the long night of what the historians have seen fit to designate the "Dark Ages." If Messiah had truly come in the Bethlehem event and come in the commonly accepted sense, as having brought by his personal presence the benison of divine grace, light and truth to the world, his long-heralded, breathlessly-awaited and celestially-proclaimed advent has culminated as the world's supreme disappointment.

The Christian thesis of the Savior's historical birth in Judea assumedly in the year 1 A.D. is challenged and jeopardized by several considerations that are glaring enough to be crucial for the whole future of the faith of the West. When the Church Fathers settled upon the date of the Bethlehem birth as the year 1 of a new dispensation, and inaugurated a new calendar reckoning with that year, they were without benefit of certain historical data that have come to light from authentic historical record since that time.

Two facts stand out as proving the fixed date to be erroneous,--assuming that there was the birth of a di-

16

vine personage about whose life the Gospels were elaborated. One is the discovered date of the death of Herod, Tetrarch of Galilee, in the year 4 B.C. The other is the recorded time of the rulership of "Cyrenius," governor in Syria when the Roman tax was levied which took Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, so that the divine birth, heralded in Scripture, might occur at that village to fulfil ancient prophecy. This time is found, on certified governmental record of Syrian history, to have been between the years 13 and 11 B.C. Herod and Cyrenius (found to be written Quirinus in the Roman records) were both mentioned (by *Matthew*) as reigning when Jesus was born. The date set for the birth is therefore found to be at least four years too late to have included Herod's effort to destroy the infant Christ by the (now generally admitted *unhistorical*) "Slaughter of the Innocents," and some twelve or thirteen years too late to have transpired "when Cyrenius was governor in Syria." It is notable that even a Catholic publicist, in an article in the Sunday *American Weekly* magazine early in 1947, conceded that the Bethlehem birth must be placed at least as early as 7 or 8 B.C.

With these two enforced corrections a host of other minor, though still important, conclusions and speculations that have become officially accepted as Christian history must perforce be thrown out, being confused by the two known dates. Indeed some of the disclaimers reach beyond minor items and put in jeopardy some of the basic claims on which the entire fabric of Christian historization rests. The frankness of Church leadership in facing the implications of

these emendations has not been open and sincere. It is deemed best to let the disclosures pass with as little publicity as possible.

Having engrafted so much Pagan usage upon its own tree, it is little wonder that Christianity has evolved and preserved so little of the meaning of these extraneous

17

and exotic customs which most of the northern countries of Europe, and their descendant populations in the Americas, have persisted in featuring in the celebration of Christmas. It has felt that it can condescendingly tolerate the admixture of Pagan "foibles" that cling like barnacles to its Nativity commemoration, without imperiling the fundamental strength and hold of the festival on its own communicants. It can afford to remain unconcerned about expounding the recondite significance underrunning the Pagan accoutrements that have been superimposed on the occasion, as to do so in any notable manner would be to lend gratuitous importance and enhancement to Pagan formulations.

And this covert apprehension and subterfuge is by no means groundless. Indeed the revelation of the true esoteric magnificence of the spiritual and theological conceptions adumbrated and allegorized by the Nordic-Teutonic-Celtic-Saxon festival usages will be seen to present a definite challenge to the whole authenticity of the Christian system, not so much as presenting the light and beauty of a rival or opponent religion, as in lending to the Christian revelation the representations of the meanings of *its own* celebratory elements, which it has lost or never known and published. In fact the startling asseveration can be made that the medley of Pagan ritual forms connected with Christmas carries a truer and more illuminating message of the inner significance of the gala day than do the distinctly Christian elucidations. This line of pursuit indeed runs so deep into the context of Christmas dramatism and symbolism as to come close to demonstrating that there is nothing in the celebration that is exclusively Christian at all, every single item being traceable to Pagan origins. Such a flat and drastic statement will be severely challenged. The present essay will stand as an answer to that challenge.

18

THE ANCIENT LINEAGE OF CHRISTMAS

The fundamental theses underlying the solstitial festival of deific rebirth trace back primarily to ancient Judaism, and back of that to the archaic Egyptian theurgical science. Ubiquitous in Egypt's religious systematism was the theme of the coming of Messiah. Horus, the central Christ figure in the texts, was described as "he who ever comes," "he who comes regularly and continuously," or who comes periodically. In some of the hymns he is hailed as "The Comer! The Comer!" Isis, the goddess mother and queen of heaven, entreats him to come and lift her out of her desolation.

What becomes indubitably clear from searching study of these old texts is that the Messianic "coming" they refer to is the advent into the evolving life of humanity on this earth plane of a form, grade or degree of consciousness which was not generable in the order of nature itself, but was the flowering to maturity of the conscious potential inherent in a seed of divine mind

implanted in the natural order *from above*. As any mother has to receive the seminal essence of a new birth and mature it to its generation, so the maternal order of nature, the material world, had to be impregnated at a point of readiness in its evolution with the seed of a divine grade of mind, give it birth and rear it to its maturity. Its reception *in utero* would be signalized zodiacally at the September date, its birth at the December period and its rearing and growth completed at the March consummation. But in the salient features of the symbolism its birth would be allocated to the December solstice. Christmas would celebrate the emergence of the divine order of conscious mind in the human race, the inception of the human grade of being to crown the

19

former pure animal level of subconscious and instinctive existence. It marked the entry of mind, reason, and the whole vast potential of the activity of thought into human motivation, installing the intellect as king over human action. The interior meaning of Christmas can never be realistically grasped until it is understood that it celebrates the coming of mind as King over the lower instincts, appetencies and passions of the primitive animal stage of biological evolution. The Christmas advent of the Prince of Peace would eventuate finally in the Easter crowning of the King of Love, for mind was to be glorified in the end by the sweet aura and radiant light of divine Love.

Of infinite significance it is to know that in all the antecedent and "prophetic" literature and religious ritual stemming into Judaism and Christianity from the venerable lore of old Egypt, the constructions dealing with the Messianic coming indubitably refer to this advent of the new higher dispensation that would supervene on earth from the birth of the thinking principle in human action, and just as indubitably can not be taken to refer to the physical birth of any personalized Christ or Messiah. Study of the ancient field of religious literature reveals no prevalence of the notion that Messiah would come on earth in the form of a human babe and man-Christ until about the second and third centuries of the Christian era, and then predominantly only in the region around the Eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. Tersely, it can be stated as verifiable truth that the conception of the Christ-Messiah as a human being of flesh and blood had not been extant in the ancient world until it took form in the degenerate philosophical period of the early Christian centuries. From the heyday of Greek philosophical brilliance in Plato's age some five hundred years before this there had ensued a tragic de-

20

cline and decay in spiritual wisdom, which Sir Gilbert Murray has famously characterized by his phrase "the failure of nerve" on the part of the Greek mind. And it was at the very lowest ebb of the philosophical spirit that a phenomenon occurred which cast the shadow of ignorance that deepened into the "Dark Ages" of Medieval Europe. It was at this epoch that the conception of Christos-Messiah as a principle of higher consciousness was transmogrified into the form of a man-God Savior, the Christ as principle turned into the Christ as *a* man. This was the supreme tragedy of human cultural history. It generated and released the frenzy that was to burn the Alexandrian library, murder Hypatia and Bruno, close up the Platonic Academies and end the benignant light of an archaic spiritual wisdom older than ancient Egypt.

Fully five thousand years before a Hebrew maid Mary nursed an infant of Nazareth the haloed Madonna and the Child were extant in Egypt as Isis holding her infant Horus. On the walls of the temple of Luxor, at a date as early as 1700 B.C. there were carved four scenes which have been reproduced in the Gospels as first-century Christian history. The first scene depicts a group of angels on a cloud making the annunciation of the coming of the Messiah King to a band of shepherds in the fields. The second represents a single angel announcing to a young maiden that she is to be the mother of this coming King. A third pictures the Nativity scene, with the two animals, the ox and the ass, present. And the fourth shows three noblemen kneeling before a babe and offering gifts. How we are expected to accept the thesis that ancient Egyptian dramatic and symbolic representation of man's evolutionary history turned into factual history in the year 1 A.D. has not been made clear to any reasoning mind. One must go deeply

21

into the study of this remote background of the Judaeo-Christian Scriptural literature to be impressed with the pivotal significance of findings such as these, for they are multitudinous and staggering in their implications.

The setting of the sun or a star in the west had been for long centuries the symbol of the descent of soul into incarnation as similarly the alternate rising of sun or star in the east at morning had allegorized the resurrection or rebirth of soul out of its burial in the dark cave of fleshly body. The three stars in the hunter's belt in the constellation of Orion had been from remote times denominated the "Three Kings" who attended the birth of the coming Lord. The figure of the Christ born among animals, or exposed to be saved by animals in a stable or a cave, was common at a very early period. The symbolism of midnight, winter and the solstice was universally prevalent as depicting the period of the Christ-birth in the depth of the "dead" condition of soul buried down under bodily inertia. One is safe in saying that not a feature of the traditional forms of celebration of Christmas is missing in the ancient background of our religion. And as one canvasses these identities and correspondences between Gospel narrative and antecedent allegorism, there grows the conviction of the non-historicity and from that the ridiculousness of the Gospel accounts of the birth of the Christ when taken as assumed occurrence in objective history. The supremely beautiful scenario of the angelic heralding of the birth of Christ in *Luke's* Gospel becomes traduced into unacceptable reality if taken as history. The singular fact of ostensible "history" that Jesus was born just six months after his forerunner John the Baptist can be given rational--and most sensationally enlightening significance only in reference to the symbolism of the zodiacal chart. That Elizabeth, the mother of John, gave birth to her son in

22

her old age, as did both Sarah and Hannah bear their sons Isaac and Samuel, carries a significance that has not been properly envisaged. The reference to the zodiacal sign of Aries, the Ram, in the items of the Christ featured as the "Lamb of God" and the shepherds with their flocks in Christmas pageantry, has been entirely overlooked, as have also the obvious Piscean implications of the Christ's twelve disciples chosen as "fishermen," and the Greek characterization of the early Christians as "little fishes" and the Christ figure himself as Ichthys,

the Fish Avatar of deity. In the precession of the equinoxes the sun was entering the sign of Pisces, the Fishes, about the time of the founding of Christianity, and we are quite ignorant today as to the concern of ancient religious interest with both astrological and natural symbolic representation. To interpret ancient Scriptures solely from the historical point of reference and ignore the poetic, figurative and emblematic, will contort their cryptic esoteric significance into gross caricature of real meaning.

Then there is the item of the name of the location of the Gospel birth. One is now in position to say that if the divine babe's birthplace had been localized in Patagonia, Lapland, Alaska or Siberia, or London or New York, he would still have been truly born in "Bethlehem." Because it is as clear as anything well can be that the name, Bethlehem, carries no possible reference to the village of that name in Palestine. What then does Bethlehem mean? The Hebrew dictionary tells us that the word is made up of *beth*, meaning "house," and *lehem* meaning "bread." It therefore means "house of bread," and is a *cryptic designation of the human body*. Where else can the Christ consciousness be born but in the human body and its brain? As the "Red Sea" in both Old and New Testament symbolism is a glyph for

23

the human body blood (since it is actually sea water and is red!), so the "Bethlehem" house of bread is a semantic veil for the human body. In the archaic zodiacal symbolism the sign of Virgo, the Virgin Mother, was poetized as the house of bread--from the fact that in it was the great star, Spica, the head of wheat, symbol of the divine bread coming down from heaven--while just six months across from it was the sign of Pisces, the Fishes. The Sages of antiquity portrayed Virgo as the mother of the first or natural man and Pisces as the Mother of the second Adam or the Christ. How astonishingly significant it must be, then, to note that in the "miracle" of the feeding of the five thousand the two foods given were the emblems of these two houses of the zodiac, Virgo and Pisces, the one the Mother of John, the forerunner, the other the mother of Jesus, just six months later! At least two of the ancient goddesses in religious dramatism were styled "Fish-mothers" of divinity, Atergatis and Semiramis. The semantic relevance of the mermaid in ancient mythology is connected with this area of reference.

24

THE RED AND THE GREEN

Having woven again the threads of connection of the great festival with its primal sources in ancient symbolic science, the way is clear to delineate as lucidly as possible the basic significations of the various rites, modes and symbols of the customary celebration. The explanation of the meaning of the two vividly contrasting colors which stand as the "theme colors" of Christmas, red and green, seems the most proper item with which to begin the exegesis. And the basic rationale underneath these colors will itself formulate the essential ground-scheme for the interpretation of most of the other symbolic features.

No treatise can dissertate upon such a matter as the birth of the Christ without blue-printing a chart of the interrelation of the several diverse but interlocked natures which enter into the constitution of man, the human-divine composite. The true--but long lost--bases of sound

religious philosophy are to be located in the realm of anthropology. Religious experience is a phenomenon transpiring within the elements of human nature. It is, so to say, a psychosomatic ferment amongst the sensual, emotional, intellectual and spiritual components of man's compound existence.

Most graphically described, man is, in Plato's analysis, half god and half animal; a god by virtue of his mind, an animal by virtue of his body. He is a god inhabiting the body of an animal. He is thus fabricated out of four separate natures, which are interfused and interrelated in one organism. He is *in toto* a combination in one physical form of four organic entifications of being or consciousness, the physical, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual, each functioning in and through its own

25

distinct body, which in each case is composed of matter in a state of atomic texture and organization consonant with its degree of fineness or coarseness in the evolutionary scale. These four bodies are maintained in communal relation to each other within the confines of the outer physical frame by the play of affinities and atomic energizations that life and nature readily, if mysteriously, succeed in regulating, the finer bodies interpenetrating and animating the coarser. Their diversity of structure is seen as a matter of the differences in frequency, wave-length and other modes of vibration of the four grades of matter composing them.

The two coarser and, in the evolutionary sense, lower bodies and their activated types of consciousness constitute what ancient arcane science denominated the lower, or natural man, called in Pauline Christianity the first Adam, or the "man of the earth, earthy," while the two finer and higher ones composed the "spiritual man," the second Adam, Paul's "Lord from heaven." The first two, symbolized respectively by earth and water, united to form man physical; the second two, emblemed by air and fire, constituted man spiritual. The four united man earthly with heavenly man. When the Bible poetically says that heaven and earth have kissed each other, it refers to the union of the two natures in the body and life of mankind.

Man's complete constitution, then, consisted of four natures so conjoined as to make him a dual creature, with a material body composed of earth and water, and a spiritual body composed of air (Latin *spiritus* means "air") and fire, with the former housing the latter, but being animated and ensouled by it. As religion is the relation between man's physical-animal nature and that of this indwelling god within him, the gist of all meanings presented in the Scriptures and theology relates to

26

the interplay between these two co-tenants of the physical body, the psyche and the soul.

This analysis prepares the ground for the explication of the red and green colors so vividly flaunted in the Yule display. The strongly contrasting yet complementary green leaves and red berries of the holly branch are not only beautiful to the sense, but stand as mentally cogent types of the two natures in man. Green is the universal color of nature on this planet, at least in the

vegetable realm. It therefore symbolizes the first or natural man, the man whose life, like that of green leafage, is drawn up out of the earth. On the other side red typifies the second Adam, or man spiritual, because the age-old and invariable symbol of spirit universal throughout the world was *fire*; and red is the common color of fire. The red stands for the fiery essence of divine spirit, the soul of man.

The Christmas message that is mutely but eloquently spoken by the holly sprig is indeed a moving sermon. It bespeaks the life, history and composition of the human soul, for it presents in dumb pantomime the growth of man natural as the green stem and its leaves, and then the generation out of these raw natural elements of man spiritual, as the fiery red product flowing at the summit. The colorful holly branch thus depicts man's potential divine spirit as the beautiful flower and fruit of a physical growth in the natural order.

Man can gaze upon the holly tree and see his own life-drama mirrored in outline and in miniature, or as the analogue of all natural process. His body is the growth and evolution of a rudimentary nucleus of life over a long period. It is his natural self, grown under the order of the world of nature and the operation of natural law. But in the fulness of time, it, too, bears its glorious fruit at the topmost reach of its "green" body,

27

which in the case of man is the head. And this fruit of the tree of life when fully ripened, were it visible to all human eyes, would be seen flashing out in the form of a radiant crown of ineffable spiritual beauty efflorescent in the purest of colors.

In both nature and in man the first or natural order of creation gives birth at its apex to the second or spiritual man. The physical creation, the "mother," labors to generate her son, the conscious creation, the Logos. As the spiritual body or bodies in which this spiritual consciousness is instrumentalized are constituted of the glowing radiance of solar light, the color of fire is the most apt earthly symbolic representation of their nature. The world of green nature bears on its top branch the bright red of the spirit. If one can imaginatively see all this in the holly, or the poinsettia, or the barberry, one will find these emblematic objects the mental goad to realizations of the most potent cathartic virtue. They unite the mental and the emotional through the subtle power of an aesthetic dynamism. They portray vividly the birth of the Christ in man as the burgeoning of red fire of spirit at the top of the green stem of the natural bodily life.

Here we have the basis of the old English legend of the blossoming of the thorn tree at Glastonberry at Christmas. It is symbolism. The tree of nature, here the thornbush, is proclaimed to put forth its bloom at the winter solstice, as precisely at this point in the cycle where involution (the soul's descent) turns into evolution (the soul's reascent), the Christ-child of noetic consciousness is born. The thornbush was in all likelihood chosen as carrying on the Old Testament allegory of the thornbush of *Exodus* aflame with divine fire.

With the tree introduced as typograph of man's natural self, the elucidation comes to the Christmas pine

28

tree. And well may the German folksong carol its adoration of the fir-tree's perennial greenness!

O Tannenbaum! O Tannenbaum! (O fir-tree! O fir-tree!

Wie green sind deine Blaetter! How green are thy leaves!)

For here nature is green, not only for the seasonal cycle of summer, but all the year round. The life of nature, preparatory as it always is to the birth of consciousness, is in its essence everlasting. Matter is indestructible, though its forms of manifestation may continually change. The root essence of material substance is imperishable. It is always a potency, latent during the alternate periods of non-manifestation, active during the opposite cycles of spirit's waking existence.

Perhaps fancy will not stray too far afield into whimsicality when it likens the darker shades of the pine's winter green or former years' growth to the dullness of matter in the inactive or latent state, while seeing in the brighter shades of the green of the summer's new growth an emblem of the more radiant energization of matter when ensouled by bright spirit in the cycles of manifestation. In the temperate and frigid zones nature has provided a type of the eternity of life and matter in never-fading greenness of the northern pine. Symbol of the immortality of life, it brings into the Christmas ritual much the same significance as the green of the holly. It represents outdoor or wild nature, thus again typifying the first or natural man in the human constitution.

29

THE GOD DOMESTICATES THE ANIMAL

But for Yuletide ceremonialism the pine is cut down and brought in and set up in human habitations. What can this betoken other than the bringing of the natural man within the pale and the aura of the influence of the god-nature in the human being? In the life of the human when body is ensouled by the more potent dynamic of spiritual consciousness, the external bodily nature is in the full sense of the word being domesticated by the divine Self that is from above. The implanted heavenly grade of mind, as it develops, takes the natural under its care and tutelage and labors patiently to transmute its norm of consciousness from crude animal instinct to intelligence and reason. The wild animal nature is being tamed and transformed by the impacts upon it of the influences of "the Lord from heaven," whose ruling motivations are those of benevolence and love-wisdom. In the Old Testament it was Esau, and in the New it was John the Baptist, both of whom stood as the type figure of the first or natural man, who lived in the wilds of external nature. Untamed wild brutish nature is to be tamed and gradually changed into the likeness of its spiritual tutor. In the transfer of a product of outdoor nature into the human dwelling there is signalized the bringing of the "wild beast" segment of man's dual composition under the influence of the divine-human grade of mind and subjecting it to the impact of the forces that will in time convert it from brute to human. Eventually superhuman glory awaits it.

But the semantic dramatism does not stop with the bringing of the green pine into the home. When the outer man is brought within the radiation of the soul's more uplifting powers, it does not long remain bleak and

30

bare in its greenness. It becomes in the transforming process lighted up with divine glories. The crowning of the human-animal with supernal grandeur of bright spirit is dramatized by the decoration of the green branches of the tree with glittering objects. Not only is the product of raw nature introduced into the human domicile; it is bedizened with every sort of tinsel and gaudy brilliance. And atop its central bough is hung the great gold star!

If the mind of the ordinary householder who trims the Yule tree could have any full measure of the deeper significance of this bright decking of the Christmas pine as an evolutionary transaction within the range of his own nature, no ritual in all the year's round of festivals could possibly engender a more dynamic exaltation of his spirit than this task of the late hours of Christmas eve. For it poetizes with aesthetic beauty the drama of the inner life of man himself. It enacts in reality the living processes by which man's own bodily organism, itself a tree of natural growth, lights up within its own organic structure a series of glowing centers of glinting radiance, which the Hindus have called *chakras*, or "wheels." They are described as saucer-like in shape and of a coruscating brilliance, as they shine within the watery confines of the body. When the ancient Sages speak of the soul's coming to earth to "kindle a flame within the tomb of the body;" and the Egyptian books announce its coming to generate "a burning within the sea," they are not indulging in extravagant flings of fancy, but are pictorializing actual processes that ensue upon the spirit's transfiguring operation within the physical body.

In fact it is to be understood that deity enters the stable of the animal-human body at its birth, and as its latent powers of divinity unfold their capabilities into

31

activity and work their magical effect upon the physical organism, it succeeds finally in lighting up twelve lamps of a radiance never seen on land or sea, which shine within the orbit of the branches of the tree of man's life. In a word, one may say that the physical tree of man's body is lighted up with the fires of divinity at the extremity of the twelve branches of his development.

In the Kabalistic literature of the Hebrews there is the great Sephirothal Tree, with the three higher and the seven lower lights enkindled upon its ten distinct branches of radiation. And this cosmical tree is but the macrocosmic replica of what is repeated in miniature in the human microcosm. The mighty work of great Deity is to cause light to shine out of the abysmal darkness. If that Power can generate in fish living in deep-sea darkness a light that makes their world clear to vision, so it can cause the lights of spiritual intelligence to glow within the divinized body of man. Humanity is to generate twelve divine lights upon the branches of its tree of life. This is set forth with explicit exactness in the last chapter in the Christian Bible, *Revelation 22*, where it is said that the tree of life shall bear twelve manner of fruits upon its branches, and its leaves shall be for the healing of the nations.

Again a striking passage from the Bible, in the language of St. Paul, says that "God who hath caused the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts; but we have this treasure in earthen vessels." We hold it in these physical bodies of ours. The bright ornaments on the Christmas fir-tree do indeed symbolize our possession of the twelve "treasures of light," which are deity's immortal gift to animal man within the scope of the Christmas ritualism.

32

And the power that will cause these twelve lights to glow upon the branches of the organic human tree is just that spirit of good-will, love and fellowship that is denominated the "Christmas spirit." As the transfiguring grace of the lower power lights up the human countenance, so in positive physical reality will the rule of brotherhood and charity in the conscious life of mankind generate these twelve beacons of the divine love-light in evolving human nature. The birth of the Christos in the consciousness of humanity will cause the collective tree of human nature to be miraculously trimmed with lights that will illumine the pathway of world history ever more brilliantly unto the day of man's deification. "I will clothe thee with light as with a garment," says the God of the Old Testament. He might have paraphrased it: "I will trim the twelve branches of your nature tree with the lights of the Christ-born radiance of love. "For 'Christmas' means 'Christ-birth.'" The *mas* is from the Egyptian *mes* "to be born." *Mess-iah* means the "(new) born *Iah*" (*Jah*), or Jehovah,--God.

And God might have added: "I will crown your tree of brilliance with the super-bright Star atop the central branch." Yes; for the twelve branch lights are the lesser lights, and the great light of the Christ consciousness glows in supreme glory in the center of all. On the Mount of Transfiguration, as recounted in the early Gnostic-Christian work, the *Pistis Sophia*, Jesus, seated in the midst of the twelve disciples, is transfigured with supernal brightness in their center. St. Paul says that we are all members of one spiritual body, of which Christ is the head. The divine splendor shines out in full power in the head, where the spark and fire of godlike intelligence glows like a living flame. The end and consummation of man's growth comes with this deific glorification in his head. A living flame bursts forth in

33

form like the petals of a fiery lotus, so that the ancients called it "the thousand-petaled lotus in the head" of divinized man. This is the pure beauteous flame of divine love and compassion which has its glorious birth in the head of man the human, and is the bright Bethlehem star whose rise in the east heralds indeed the birth of the savior of the world. If this bright star of the morning is not brought to shining in human hearts the Christ is not born in the world. Where can the Christ-mind be given birth if not in the human minds and hearts? Could ten thousand Christs of Nazareth implement Christliness in the world if its gracious spirit did not govern the lives of mortals? Not until all Christendom makes that which the Bethlehem birth beautifully symbolizes a living reality in the daily run of its world-life will the Christmas tree of humanity be decked with its twelve lights and its topmost Star in anything but empty form.

Instead of the gold star on the topmost limb, ancient ingenuity also devised the figure of the one branch of the tree that put forth golden leaves--the Golden Bough. This was used to symbolize

the Christos nature, whose golden light of spiritual splendor become the glorious end product of the whole natural creation, which, St. Paul says, groans and travails in the pains of parturition until it manifests the Sons of God, or the Christ. It is a most significant fact that in many tongues the word for "gold" is the same as the word for "light." In the Hebrew "light" is *aor*, in French "gold" is *or*, in Latin *aurum*, giving us the English *ore*. The Egyptian *Hor-us* is the golden light of the divine Christ grade of brilliance. That his name for centuries was Iusa before it was Horus, bespeaks again the direct source of the later name, Jesus.

34

Greek and Roman mythologies made the golden bough the passport in the hands of the heroes who would adventure into the dark depths of the Stygian "underworld," whose mislocation by the scholars for centuries has thrown all exegetical effort sadly awry of true comprehension and interpretation. Not only was it the hero's passport of entry into the nether world of Sheol, Amenta, Hades and hell, but it was his necessary exit-permit from those same umbrageous grotts and caverns where the shades of the "dead" flitted about in the darksome recesses of semi-night. His possession of the powers symbolized by the bough of spiritual gold alone guaranteed his emergence in safety from this underrealm of fleshly dusk.

35

THE YULE-LOG AND THE MISTLETOE

In much the same broad significance as the pine tree comes the symbolism of the Yule Log. As the log again portrays outdoor nature, its ritual treatment within the house differs only in form from that of the green pine by the brightness of the ornaments. In the case of the log the "fire" is actually produced, as the wood is placed directly on the hearth and burned. Here the emblemism of being "consumed in the fire" is introduced. All Bible students are familiar with this figure of the lower, coarser elements of man's composition, the dross and the chaff, being cast into the fiery furnace and utterly consumed. This carries the significance here. The log of wood, creation of the natural world, speaks of the natural man with all his gross propensities springing from the carnal nature. Under so many names and figures in the old Scriptures these are to be defeated, routed and slain by the sword of the spirit of God. The "animal" was to be burned upon the four-square altar of the doubly-dual nature of man. In this world of mingled soul and body fires, flames of pure spiritual consciousness being smudged by lurid flames of the sensual instincts, the mightier potency of the diviner flame conquers in the end and coarse matter is burned out, leaving the flame clear and beauteous. The Egyptians called the body wherein these two fires contend for mastery "the crucible of the great house of flame." Again they denominated the earth, or the earthy body of man, "the Pool of the Double Fire." The chaff is cast into the fiery furnace of earthly passion and consumed. The burning of the Yule log on the hearth in the old days

36

stands as beautiful typism of this great segment of the festival's meaning.

Then there is the strong suggestive symbolism of its being burned *on the hearth* in the home of humans. It is obvious that the word "hearth" is closely connected with "heart." The hearth well represents in the house the innermost holy of holies of the sacred temple of religion. It is in the deepest mind and soul of the human that this conversion of the lower elements of his nature into the all-consuming fire of redeeming love takes place. The hearth of old times was the center and, so to say, the altar of the family life. Fitting and impressive it is, then, that the Yule log be laid upon the hearth and in the very heart of the home be lighted up and transformed into the type of spiritual and deific essence.

High up on the great oak grew the mistletoe, so uniquely employed by the Druids--whose name is derived from the Greek word meaning "oak"--as a symbol of the divine elevation of the soul in man. Its semantic import stems from the fact that it is a parasite and grows aloft on the branches of its host. Of most pertinent significance it is that it does not draw its sustenance directly from the earth, but secondarily lives upon a growth that does extract its strength and nutriment of energy transmuted from earthly elements, in combination with the vital essences it can abstract from the air, the sun and the rain.

From these basic data the plant becomes an apt figure of the Christos. For the Christ-self grows high up on the tree of the natural life, and likewise must draw its sustenance from what the nature-growth has drawn up from earth and converted into forms of nourishment for its rootage and support. This phase of the imagery will glow more brilliantly in the light of the candle sym-

37

bol. But it shines out clearly here as well. The Christ nature can not evolve and blossom to mature loveliness unless sustained from below by the products of the life of the physical organism. It is, in a strictly symbolic sense also a parasite, living on the physical body of its host. The divine plan countenances this interdependence of host and guest on the successive planes of nature. A lower material organism must play host to a higher life energy, while the latter on its part ensouls the form that sustains it in the dual relationship.

The idea of lovers kissing under the mistletoe sprig accentuates the conception that the birth of the Christ follows upon the union of the two lovers in man's nature, the spirit-soul and the body-soul. The mistletoe suggests the Christ, born high up on the evolutionary tree of life, subsisting upon that tree's natural elements, and generated by the union of the "female" physical components of the tree's life derived from the soil with the "male" spiritual principles of the air and the sun. On our planet there is no life generable without the union of these four elements. The mistletoe symbolizes this union of the human and divine, or male and female, elements, the "kissing" or commingling of which bring the Christ to his birth.

38

THE PARCHED WHEAT

A Nordic custom of the Christmas celebration that has fallen into desuetude was that of sprinkling wheat on the doorstep outside the house or upon the hearth inside, or of parching wheat in the fire of the Yule log. It should need no dissertation to elucidate the significance of

wheat and its edible product, bread, in religious literature. John, Paul, the Christ figure himself and many another allegorist of the spiritual life have made wheat and bread the great central symbol of the divine soul in man. "This is that bread which came down from heaven, that if a man eat of it he shall hunger no more." The Christos says that his (spiritual) body is the bread of life, broken into pieces that all may eat of it, and that all who will eat of it shall have eternal life.

But the allegorical genius of the ancients pictured the unground and unbaked grain as the "raw" or undeveloped germ of future Christhood, the seed of divinity that had to undergo planting in the soil of human nature, initial "death" in that dark underworld, then germination, growth and eventual ripening of its manifold harvest in the perfected product. This process wrote the history of the youthful Sons of God as they first descended into incarnation, being planted in the ground of human life, "dying" as divinities to be reborn as men, regaining their Paradise through growth and evolution, and returning to the Father's house as victors over the world and the power of matter. These pure "virgin souls" (for they were named in India *Kumaras*, meaning "virgin youths," "celibate young men," since they were children of God, born of his eternal mind, not yet ever wedded to material bodies and now in their first descent into bodily life) were likened to the raw

39

wheat grain, needing to be ground, mealed, baked and made nourishing for man. So St. Paul says: "And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but *bare grain*, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." This is to remind us that God does not plant in our nature the full-grown tree of the Christ consciousness, but only its seed potential. Failure to recognize this true element in religious ideology has led to untold fanaticism and dementia.

This "bare grain" of inexperienced and undeveloped divinity is to suffer maceration, to be refined, then mixed with "water," then baked and finally eaten by man for his eternal nutriment. Have we sufficient analogical skill to see that the grinding, the milling, the flouring of the raw grain is just the breaking up of the unity of Christhood on its own high level, as it is fragmented in its division and partition amongst the bodies of mortals, and its crushing between the good and evil of the rough human experience undergone in its life as the ensouling principle in mortal bodies? The Christ himself in the drama says that we must eat his "body which is broken for you."

In the apocryphal *Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans* there is found one of the most striking analogical depictions of this process in all Christian literature, in the passage in which the soul, speaking, says: "For I am the wheat of God; and I shall be ground between the teeth of the wild beasts that I may be found the pure bread of Christ." Ground between the teeth of the wild animals indeed is its fate, for the allegory refers to these animal bodies of ours within whose constitution it makes its earthly sojourn. The bare wheat grain is the descending virgin soul of divinity; the animals are these

40

bodies of ours; the grinding is the crushing and bruising between the upper and the nether millstone of our dual nature; the water that cements the flour into cake form is the watery nature of the body; the fire that bakes the cakes is the double fire of heavenly flames of love and the murky flares of the "earthly, sensual, devilish" lower self that rage within us; and the "pure bread of Christ" is the finally perfected and fully nourishing cake of the divine soul glorified. God plants the wheat grains of his generated children in the soil of humanity, and looks to see the milling and the cake-baking take place in the "crucible of the great house of flame." The Egyptian *Book of the Dead* tells of the soul being "moistened with water and roasted with fire in the underworld." And the underworld, let mystified scholars be enlightened at last, is this world of ours.

A shorter symbol, or analogue, that quite well carried the same broad meaning was the parching of the raw wheat grains. Parched wheat is itself a tasty and nutritious edible. So that to scatter wheat about the door, or to parch it on the hearth, especially in the flames of the Yule log, was to dramatize faithfully the purifying and divinizing experience of the soul in the progress of its development of the Christ nature through life in the flesh.

41

THE CANDLE IN THE WINDOW

And the candle with its encircling halo of mystical radiance--what is its message of beauty and significance? More wonderfully even than the pine tree and the Yule hearth-fire and the holly does this enlightening symbol of the Christ-birth announce its meaning for the intelligence of thinking man. Here is the flame that connotes the fire of deific being in the mortal constitution. It is attached to and holds its connection with the body of *animal* tallow by means of the wick, tipped by flame at its top, but immersed deeply in a body of animal derivation below. The wick corresponds to the animal soul, or psyche, which in the human organism is the connecting principle between spirit-soul and physical body. Then there is the solid body of oil-rich material from the animal world. The candle thus constitutes an almost exact reduplication of the organization of the three bodies in man.

The power of spirit, represented by the flame, is imparted to the wick by the energies of intelligence in an order of conscious being far transcending the physical world. From the wick it is brought into relation with the tallow, typifying the lower world. In the meeting of these two, flame and tallow, takes place the physical-chemical operation that should speak in voluble tones to the mystical sense of mankind. By the power inherent in its nature the flame is able to act upon the tallow so as to change its state from solid to liquid, then from liquid to gaseous, and in this form convert it, transmute it, into the essence of its own magically powerful nature. Thus it continues to feed upon the strength of the elements below it in the structure and so perpetuates its existence in the manifest world.

42

The parallel with man's life is perfect. The flame of divine spirit at the summit of his nature communicates itself through the intermediary wick of the human-animal soul to the elements of the animal-body itself. There it continues to refine and sublimate through its efficacious contact

with their more sluggish nature, until in the end it converts them "into the likeness of its own glorious body," as St. Paul phrases it. It is the fire of divinity within us that, while drawing its own nourishment and prolonging its own existence in the body by feeding upon the lower elements of the physical, is at the same time lifting that body into its upper kingdom by its power of transubstantiation, a mystery that must be thought of in the terms of a spiritual alchemy. The flame of spirit-soul feeds upon the subordinate elements of man the natural, the while it converts them into the similitude of its own transcendent life. Such is the grandiloquent message of the Christmas candle in the window or above the altar, proclaiming silently, but beautifully the birth of the Christos.

The philosophical moral of this elucidation is all too likely to be missed by those "spiritual" cultists of the present day who most need to be impressed with what the wondrous analogue has to teach them in correction of their overweening laudation of "spirit" and corresponding derogation of "matter." One who has ever deeply reflected on the candle flame as he sees it replenished, refueled by the contribution of baser matter to its maintenance can never again join the blatant chorus of philosophical condemnation of matter. Without matter to feed its life, spirit could not for a moment maintain its connection with living experience in the world, and its own evolution would be at a standstill. All too much of unschooled philosophy has berated matter, decried spirit's alliance with it and characterized the

43

soul's relation to it as its sin and fall into degradation. Orthodox theology has tainted its systematism with the same allegation of the "fall" into matter and generation.

But all this is simply an unbalanced and unintelligent mishandling of subtle elements of the old cosmic dramas. Soul's linkage with matter in incarnation is the natural and wholly salutary and beneficent planting of a seed in its proper soil. Without the union of seed and soil there can be no new growth. The human body and its sensuous life provide the fertile soil; the unit of soul consciousness is the divine seed. Spirit must be able to relate itself to matter so as to be able to draw upon the sustaining power of the energy in the atom if it is to establish itself anew in a cycle of growth.

It is time the endless prattle of ages against what early Christian doctrinism called "the malignancy of matter" be silenced by the fuller understanding of the eternal role of benignant purpose which matter plays in the cosmic evolutionary economy. God produced his material creation, sun, moon, stars, earth, animals, vegetation, man; and pronounced it good. Only erring half-taught religionists have pronounced it evil. The religion that has implanted the universal idea that man was born in sin because the soul came to share the life of the flesh has projected a most baleful influence into the stream of human ideology. Man's life would rise many grades in the scale of dignity and happiness if he would cease to despise his body. Of a surety his flesh is not to dominate him. But it is to be honored for the indispensable and noble service which it performs together with the soul. A sound philosophy will not heap contumely on the flesh, the handmaid of the soul.

44

THE STAR IN THE EAST

The star of Bethlehem and the three Magi it guided across the Arabian desert! Are they to be taken as historical actualities? Hardly. Many Christian writers no longer view them in this light. They are classed as legend and poetry. They constitute another of those splendid allegories of the ascent of bright spirit from out the region of material night to regain celestial glory. "We have seen his star *in the east* and are come to worship him." So spake the three "Wise Men" from the East at the birth of Christos.

The Messiah comes not as a single unit of consciousness, but as a threefold power. It is Spirit-Soul-Mind; three in one, yet one in three. He comes, so to say, and his advent brings his three aspects to manifestation; or he comes *as* these three. Spirit, as manifest in the flesh, is ever a trinity of faculties. Its lowest facet, the only one that comes immediately into the brain consciousness, is Mind. Above that stands Soul, and still higher is Spirit. As these three rays of his power may be said to constitute his coming in three forms, they are said to accompany him to earth. And as their combined development is what in reality brings him here, they are said to come to pay homage to him. They combine to consummate his greatness and completeness. In the Gospel allegory this relation to him came out as "worship."

As to the star--what is it? Can it be taken astronomically? Again and most emphatically, no! Even staid astronomers, deluded by the commonly assumed historicity of the Gospel story, have childishly gone on record as affirming that "somewhere near" the time of Jesus' birth there was an exceptional and rare conjunction of five of the planets. Only a few years ago we

45

witnessed the interesting spectacle of five of the planets closely bunched in the western sky of evening. The phenomenon brought no birth of divinity, with the most savage of all wars going on at the time. The guileless astronomers had overlooked the statement in *Matthew's* Gospel that made their guessing weird and preposterous. "Now the star came and stood over the place where the young child was." Let us picture Jupiter--itself some hundred times larger than the earth,-- Saturn, Mars, Neptune and Uranus, all crowding in the heavens directly above the tiny stable in Bethlehem village! It is not to be overlooked that such irrationality is only one instance of the havoc that religious infatuation and hypnotization can work in otherwise capable minds.

The Star of Bethlehem is the bright radiance of the divine soul shining in the innermost recesses of evolving human minds, and rising with man as he emerges, symbolically on the east, from out the dark night of his immersion in matter and body. As it grows to its adult state the soul becomes a shining star of bright ray in the human head. When it shines forth there arises the gleam of its manifestations as the three "spiritual magicians." The bursting out of the light of this triple star upon infant humanity, as the race begins to incorporate Christly principle in its action, is naturally pictured as bringing the three Magi or Sages of wisdom to the earthly cradle where, all meanly wrapped in swaddling clothes of earthly flesh, he lies pictured as the infant at the beginning of his career to redeem animal man to divinity. Their offering of gifts of incense, sweet myrrh and gold betokened their contribution to his unified completeness. Gold emblems

the highest life of spirit; incense is the sweet odor of balsam treated with fire, the symbol of nature transmuted by soul; and myrrh is

46

the sweet-savored vegetable that typifies the natural contribution to the life of spirit.

Somewhat akin in significance to the red holly berry and the poinsettia was the red rose of Christmas symbolism. Pictured on the cross at the junction of the two arms, it emblemized the Christ-birth as the product of spirit and matter "crossed" in the life of man. Like the Glastonbury thornbush it, too, was legendarily asserted to bloom at midnight of Christmas Eve. As the "tree" of the cross on which the Christ was crucified was dramatized as the far-descended branch of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, so the Christmas rose on the cross was supposed to have blossomed forth in December as a stem from Jesse's ancient rod of divinity. As a sixteenth century German carol puts it:

I know a rose-tree spring

Forth from an ancient root,

As men of old were singing.

From Jesse came the shoot

That bore a blossom bright

Amid the cold of winter,

When half-spent was the night.

By ancient symbolic reckoning the solstitial period in December marked the half-way point in the "night" of the soul's incarnation. And it was precisely at this point, also by symbolic connotations, that the Christ principle ended its sleep of "death" in matter and was quickened to a new birth. The Christ was the red rose flowering at midnight in the solstice of "winter." As Jesse was the father of David this Christ-rose was in the other tradition of Jewry to be the Messiah "born of David's line" in the city of "Bethlehem."

47

"CAROL, BROTHERS, CAROL"

The carols of Christmas must have their due place in the exposition. These musical ballads that thousands of throats send throbbing in sincere joyousness up to the rafters of churches embody man's most blithesome expression of his Christmas spirit. Many are magnificent beyond words. If all those who sing could catch the faintest true conception of the awesome burden of the profounder esoteric significance of the sonorous phrases chorused at the Yuletide, their hearts

and minds would fairly palpitate with the overmastering realization of the grandeur of the human-divine epic hidden in these majestic runes.

A Christmas Eve service in an Episcopalian Church attended by the present writer in 1953 opened with the tenor solo sung before the processional. The program announced that it was considered to be the oldest known Christmas carol, dating away back of the fifth century. It was sung in Latin and simply hailed the Christ, son of the Virgin Mary. But the first four words suddenly struck the mind with the most acute realization of their profounder significance. They were as follows: "*A solis natus carine . . .*" Referring to the Christ, these words said that he was "born on the *hinge of the sun*." The astonishing circumstance here was that if this was truly a Christian carol, it could be interpreted in clear meaning only by Pagan formulas! For Christianity knows nothing of the symbolism of the Christmas dating in relation to the winter solstice, or the fact that this dating allocates the divine birth to the conditions of the balance between soul and body, when soul, having reached the nadir of its descent into matter, slowly turns and pivots, as it were, on the *hinge of the solstice* to begin its

48

upward path of return to heaven. The December solstice is the hinge on which descending soul swings around at the nadir; the June solstice is likewise the hinge of the sun at its upper turn. But the Christ is born in the "winter."

What is perhaps the most salient feature accentuated in the carols generally has been little noted. It is the oft-repeated linking of heaven and earth together in the jubilee, to stress mightily the fact that both hemispheres of life were beneficiaries of the great gift of Christhood to the world of men. The first verse of the fine old hymn, *Joy to the World*, well exemplifies this feature:

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

Let earth receive her king!

Let every heart prepare him room

And heaven and nature sing!

Heaven and earth are exhorted to sing together. We must ask why heaven is to join in rejoicing over the advent of divinity to this planet. Here we come back to the holly, the pine tree and the Yule log. Both nature on the one side and consciousness on the other were to be blessed by the descent of Messiah to earth. Nature, in the form and person of her top-most product, man physical, was to receive as her honored guest the spark of celestial fire, which under her tutelage would eventually elevate the natural man to the order and rank of divine intelligence. Nature was to have the germinal potential of soul implanted in her bosom, and only this tie gave it the chance to rise in the scale of developing being. It was indeed the great aeonial occasion for nature's rejoicing. She was to be elevated from blind instinct to mind.

As to heaven, it was the grand cosmic opportunity for those citizens of heaven, those deific mind-born Sons of God, to link their potential capabilities with the gen-

49

erative powers of matter and nature in human bodies, and thus achieve a new birth and further growth in the eternal advance. For both heaven's sons and nature's creation it was equally the grand event of all the ages. Well indeed might man and nature unite to celebrate the high festival. It meant a nearer approach to godhood for both, and full apotheosization for those already at the threshold of divinity. It was God's gift to them of a new reach and range of life that would in the event lift each to a higher kingdom of being, an expanded dimension of consciousness. If this is not the due occasion for both heaven and nature to rejoice, then creation furnishes no adequate ground for jubilation.

This analysis underlies the reason why the Christ's advent was proclaimed from heaven to men on earth. It rang from the skies. "Heaven's arches rang" with the exultant shouts of the celestial hosts, and "earth gave back the sound" from its plains below. Earth sent back to heaven the echo of its joyous halleluiahs, resounding throughout the empyrean. The hosts of the twelve legions of angels, sons of the God-Mind, who were preparing to migrate downward to our planet, would in the round of the aeon return rejoicing, victors over "death," having burst asunder the bars and gates of this lower "hell." It was the festal day of all the earth and no less the gala day for the angelic hosts above. The festival would lack its true import unless both men and angels alike realized its meaning in both spheres of being. For the event meant a new heaven for spirits of light and a new earth brightened with heavenly glory for men.

So angels in the clouds of heaven announced the coming to shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. As the Messiah coming in this era of the zodiacal cycle was to come in the sign of Aries, the Ram, when he was to be heralded as the

50

Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, inevitably the drama personified these humans who were to domesticate and care for this tender Lamb in its infancy as "shepherds." So the annunciation was made to shepherds in the fields, in the night and winter of incarnation. It is said that no sheep are ever watched out in the fields of Palestine or Syria at night later than October of each year. Hence the allegorical character of the story is confirmed by its obvious non-historicity.

The pageantry of snowy winter attending the Messiah's birth is of course altogether Northern and astrological symbolism. It depicts the winter solstice and the Northern winter with its snow and all its poetic incitements. But the true sense of all this has been lost. The iciness of the season is the outward arctic symbol of the cold deadness of the soul when it has gone to its torpid sleep of inertness, its "hibernation" under nature's chilling spell and lies wrapped in unconsciousness, like the wheat grains in winter's soil, until awakened to new life and regeneration by April's strengthening sun.

At the solstice the sun stands still for a period of about ten days, neither losing nor gaining in its light. Here is the astrological symbol of spirit's equalized relation with matter, when it is weighed in the scales of the exact balance or equilibration between the forces of soul and body. Humanity at its present state stands at precisely this point of stabilization between the powers of soul and those of sense. In this close relation the opportunity is afforded to both these elements to consummate their interlocking and their "marriage" and produce the Christ-child as their offspring. Thus the solstice of winter is the zodiacal portraiture of every aspect of the relation of soul to body, out of which the Christos is to have its new generation.

Like the sun of late December, the unit of soul-mind

51

has gone as far down the scale into matter's depths as it can go. There it stands, held fast by the equilibrated powers of matter. The two conflict and war with each other until their reconciliation is effected through the intermediary offices of the Christ as its power evolves. And the final at-one-ment is achieved as the two learn to synchronize their natures. With the harmony thus established comes the peace on earth and good-will among men that the angels announced to the shepherds.

But the horrid scroll of history since the first century belies any historical reference to the meaning of Messiah's coming at a given epoch in a given personality, and sets the seal of truth on the hypothesis that the Gospel story is the dramatic representation of man's total evolution to divinity, a goal which is yet to be achieved in anything like its fulness. It is far better to know that Messiah has not yet come--in the final sense of an overt event in objective history--than to cherish the common belief that he has come, and that succeeding history has displayed more in human savagery than any age before it. If what has eventuated in history since the divine event fulfills the meaning of Messiah's birth, there is little about which to sing halleluiahs and bedeck the hall with holly. The hope of humanity is in the realization that the Christ is yet to come, and to come not in any manger bed or chamber of luxury, but to reign as King of Love in the lives of individuals and in the statecraft of the nations. To proclaim that Messiah has come--and left the world groveling in brutish lust for butchery--would be to crush man's spirit in despair.

The failure of two thousand "blithe Noels" to bring the Christly spirit to birth in the world is easily accounted for. Taken as overt historical event occurring personally to one man, and not understood as the implanta-

52

tion of the "bare grain" of the future growth of godliness in all hearts, the mighty cathartic and transforming force of the accolade to infant deity *went out from* all hearts and dissipated itself upon the imagined figure of this one alleged personage, when it was intended that it should *go inward* to work its benign efficacy upon all souls. The Christ was objectively heralded but not subjectively received. He was hailed out there in history, but not welcomed into the inn of each heart. Homage was lavished upon his physical personality, when his spiritual body should have been sacrificially eaten and psychically assimilated. The enormous collective stream of psychic

adoration doubtless focused over the mythical stable in Bethlehem and formed a veritable Shekinah there. And there it is reanimated and reinforced year after year at Christmas. But, if the quality and character of Western history be a competent criterion, evidently there it stays. Bethlehem receives a vast emotional inundation; somehow the rest of the world is left without beatitude. The Yule greeting goes out voluminously to Judea; all too obviously it does not return to the senders. It is spent outwardly upon a supposed historical event, and apparently exhausted in the spending. The vast psychic *outpouring* is wasted upon the symbol, when the symbol, its majestic connotation converted into the realities of love and brotherhood, should generate the wondrous leaven of universal charity and send it pulsing through all the hearts in the world.

The historization of the drama and the beautiful allegory swallowed up the spiritual efficacy of the annual ritual, and therefore simply failed to carry home to any minds the pivotal truth on which its beneficent leavening of humanity entirely depended. The nub of the great sweeping significance was the cardinal truth that

53

unless the Christ be born, loved, reared and exalted as ruler in the conscious life of every individual mortal, his birth has not been brought to pass. One birth in Bethlehem is not enough to leaven the world. All men must be reborn, and only in this collective rebirth is the Christos born. If he is not reborn in each heart, he has had his birth nowhere. He can not be born outside of human hearts, minds and consciences. What good could one man's divine love do in a world rankling with the petty selfishness of individuals and the unrelenting animosity of nations? Christos will be born, Messiah will come, when Love reigns in the human breast, and humanity will be born as it gives birth to the King of Love. Philips Brooks in his touching *O Little Town of Bethlehem* pleads that the spirit of Christos

Be born in us today.

If Christmas does not implant the spirit of divine love ever more deeply in all souls, it is celebrated in vain. And never will the festival of gladness generate its high cathartic power to spiritualize the race until, instead of the physical birth of one babe in the impossible Bethlehem story (taken as history), the anniversary at the solstice speaks volubly to every intelligent human of the birth within the area of his own consciousness of the soul of divine graciousness and compassion.

54

BETHLEHEM AND BETHANY

Bethlehem itself is hardly to be taken geographically in connection with the event. Scholars have been unconscionably slow to derive any central significance from the etymology of the town name. *Beth-lehem* means, as any Hebrew knows, "the house of bread." This was an emblematic designation of the house of Virgo, the Virgin in the Zodiac. The wheat symbolized by the great star Spica in that house of the heavens emblemized the Christ coming as the divine bread to be

eaten mystically by all souls. (See the author's *The Lost Light* for a full and revealing elaboration of this entire theme.) Indeed it could be affirmed that the ancient books would have proclaimed the Christ-birth as "occurring" in Bethlehem even if no such town had stood on the map; or rather they would have seen to it that a town appropriately located according to some semantic scheme would have been given the name of Bethlehem. (That the name of this particular town is to be accounted for in this way is indeed fairly probable, for this was the ancient religious custom.) For some thousands of years the venerable documents of Egypt allocated the Messianic birth to the town of Annu (Anu) in the Nile valley. In Annu, the books stated, Christ had gone to his "death" and there he would be born again. And it is a breath-taking discovery in Comparative Religion study that Anu is in one passage described as the "place of *multiplying bread*."

This Egyptian background can not be discounted as the genuine source of the "miracle" in which Jesus feeds the five thousand hungered gathering by *multiplying* the loaves and fishes. The Greeks named Anu Heliopolis, the "city of the sun," the spiritual city where the

55

sun of divine soul went to its "death" and had its resurrection. Anu in the Egyptian system was the place of increasing the divine bread of eternal life! And this "city" is finally *the human body itself*, where soul first goes to its "death," then has its glorious resurrection. Likewise this "city" is *Beth-lehem*, the house of bread, when the zodiacal symbolism is transferred from Egyptian to Hebrew name and type. Egypt had proclaimed the solstitial birth of the Son of God ages before it became the current legend in Hebrew hands.

What little there is to Christmas that can be claimed as distinctively Christian is itself marred by misguided comprehension of its relevance and quite erroneous application of its symbolism. It is almost a wholly Pagan festival that we celebrate. The dire tragedy is that we no longer have the perspicacity to discern in it the transcendent glory of the original Pagan significations. The gala-day of all human-divine history goes off as a mere anniversary celebration in the spirit of a worldly carnival. That few observe it in the exalted appreciation of its profound mystical values bespeaks the depths of our philosophical failure and the decay of our culture.

56

YULE AND NOEL

It remains to build up the structure of the two familiar names attached closely to the Christmas gaiety. They are *Yule* and *Noel*. Nowhere has there been seen any scholar's derivation of *Yule* from its obvious philological sources. It almost incontestably springs from the ancient Egyptian name of Deity, *IU*, meaning "(the Deity) who comes," and the Hebrew *EL*, "God." Its total rendering would then read: "The Deity that comes as God," or, more simply, "the coming God." The Egyptians many times called Horus, or Iusa, "he who comes regularly and continually," and in hymns he is hailed and appealed to as "The Comer!" *IU* is the verb meaning "to come." In course of Nordic and Anglic transmission, the *IU* became *YU* and the *EL* more phonetically conjoined to it as *LE*, giving us in the end *YULE*. As the Divinity under zodiacal symbolism "came" at the winter solstice, the late December period became designated as the Yuletide and its festival "the Yule."

As to *Noel*, adopted as the French name for Christmas, the same terminal *el* unites here with the Greek root of all words meaning divine knowledge, the primal root of the Greek verb *gignosko*, "to know," and the *no* in the English word "know." *No* is the Greek stem meaning the divine *noetic* mind of God, or in essence and potentiality the mind of the Christ. The Greek word for "mind" is itself *Nous*, meaning of course the cosmic Mind. *Noel* would then mean "the mind of God," as manifested in his Son or Sons born on earth. The birthday of the Christly principle was allocated to the winter solstice. When, therefore, choirs chant joyously "Sing We All Noel!", the import is that we mortals can in this festive celebration exult in the birth or initial advent of that same mind which was also in Christ into the scope

57

of our conscious life. And certainly earth offers nothing more worthy of rhapsodic song from mortal lips than this event. If we fail to rise to ecstatic joy over the contemplation of this crucial episode in our racial history, we are "stocks and stones, and worse than senseless things" indeed.

So potent, however, is a symbolic ritual that, even though the millions who enact the annual ceremonials and go to the considerable labor and sacrifice of presenting the round of gifts year after year have little or no real conception of the explicit meaning of their activities, they still catch something of the inexplicable impressiveness of the occasion. In spite of the fact that the meaning escapes the individual celebrant as a commemoration of an evolutionary crisis and the end and beginning of distinct epochs, and adumbrates a spiritual transformation that he can consummate for himself, still the sheer beauty of the symbolism and imagery of the memorial, standing in their purely external form, reaches deeply into the psychic consciousness and stirs there profound intimations of human brother-hood and the love emotion. For a few short hours on December twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth the Christian world is brought to some measure of realization of the loveliness of charity and fraternity. Worldly cares, anxieties and concerns of the daily struggle are forgotten for an interlude, while elders enter into the glee of childhood elated over engaging toys. A brief foretaste of what it would be to live in a world of amity and heartfelt good-will is enjoyed, a bit wonderingly. But all too quickly the glow of humanism fades, the carols give way to the prevalent decadent "pep music," and the daily interests and the tone of secularity crowd out the new-born Christ spirit from the heart.

Christmas is the salvation to a large extent of what true Christian spirit is extant. Its anticipatory eager-

58

ness and the momentary touch of fellowship engendered by it keep the soul of brotherhood from threatened extinction in the modern world of science and engrossment in the externalities of existence.

But it is the earnest presentment of this essay that if to the external beauty of the Yuletide ritualism there was added the full intellectual apprehension of the precise symbolic significance of all the conventional customs perpetuated in beautiful traditional fashion every year, there would be released from out the subliminal depths of man's divine subconscious potential such a

flood of Christly love, born of beauty and understanding combined, as would sweep Christianity into the hearts and minds of the age. This would come because it would touch and bestir in man's deeper nature the latent powers of the Christ consciousness themselves. With their awakening would come the birth and later the adult development of the Christ mind. It would bring the spiritualization of the world, the apotheosization of humanity.

The force of ritual is powerful in its sheer outward performance. Even when its forms and movements are without rational appeal, they stir the soul to feelings of beauty. But if there was added the still more potent force that would flow in powerfully from the mind's clear grasp of the symbolic intimations of the rites, the operation would lift the very soul to moments of ineffable exaltation. This is precisely the psychological element lacking in the festival's annual incidence, the one factor requisite to make it the efficacious channel of spiritual purgation and uplift.

The mind is unquestionably the central dynamo of all psychological energizations. But merely outward feelings sensually excited by pageantry, no matter how beautiful in themselves, can not bestir the soul's deepest

59

sensibilities as profoundly and as lastingly as can the logical cognitions of understanding. Philosophy is the mother of understanding and that in turn of affectional states, and these set the norm and tenor of individual stability and psychic integration, the health of the mind carrying the health of the body with it.

Instead of being merely a periodic recurrence of gifting and a happy time for children, with a few carols thrown in, Christmas could be the occasion of a veritable annual re-baptism of the conscious mind in a flood of supernal benignancy released from the hovering Oversoul of divinity, the immanent-transcendent God within man, that would constitute a periodical cathartic purification of the soul and a dynamic regeneration of the spirit in the body. It carries an ordination of ancient wisdom designed to utilize astronomical features of the season to impress upon human understanding the significance for man himself of all that which the outer natural phenomena can adumbrate for him of the interrelation of soul-consciousness and mundane body.

Like the winter sun, his own sun-soul has gone down into the underworld of material darkness and lies "dead" and inert in that cave of earth. The solstice tells him that for the period of the human evolution that soul of his is bound in with matter in a state of stabilization, or equilibration of its energies. For a long time--pictured by the ten days of the solstice--that soul, a divine unit in its own right--will wage an even battle with the elemental powers of this plane of existence. But slowly the cycle will swing around past its solstice, the soul will begin to gain on the inertia of matter and the sluggish inhibitions of body; and finally it will have put all material powers under its feet, and emerge victor over "death" and the "grave."

60

ANGELIC SONGS ARE RINGING

These ennobling truths the seasonal festival will impress upon human intellection with ever more realistic cogency; until the tree, the holly, the lights and star, the candle, the cradled babe, the carols and the organ will release such a tide of sweeping realizations in man's psychic realm as will cause his heart to throb in thrilled ecstasy, with access of a more than joyous sense of brotherhood of mortals linked together in the bonds of cosmic beneficence. A choir marching past him in a church aisle, with each singer carrying a lighted candle, and pouring out the strains of

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,

Glory to the New-Born King.

will lift the psyche close to the level where truly the song of angelic voices might be caught in mystic enchantment. And as surges of transcendent emotion of beauty, love and goodness inundate his mind, he will indeed realize what in truth it means to give glory to the new-born King. For it will carry far beyond the mere outward idea of paying homage to a babe in remote time and place--beautiful though this is as symbol--and cause to glow within the breast that star of inner light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

There are those who have been impressed with this view of the Yule festival and who mentally assent to its essential correctness. But they demur to it as a detraction from the psychic force and impressiveness of the holiday if it is thus reduced to a psychological and intellectual realization and not invigorated with its significance as the commemoration of a historical event of transcendent importance. They raise the demurrer that

61

to denude it of all outer dress of historical association and leave it standing as mere drama of an internal and purely subjective ideation in consciousness sadly detracts from the realistic and affecting unction of the festival.

To this there must be entered here a vigorous counter-claim. No mistake could be greater than this assumption. History has now demonstrated that the impressive power of the festival, when based on its alleged historical foundations, has fallen short of the saving efficacy it should have yielded. The fact, strange but true, is that not only would the rituals *not* lose their dynamic dramatic power from the understanding that they are outward symbolizations of an internal spiritualizing process and not historical events reviewed in commemoration, but they would take on a tenfold greater force of psychic beatification from the recognition that it is a birth in all men and not in one single historical individual that they celebrate. Instead of going flat and meaningless because this view attaches no single event of history to them, the ritual would rise to unimaginable heights of exalting emotional power from the knowledge that they memorialize not one, but all spiritual rebirth in history, past and still to come. When the mind catches the universal and at the same time personal meaning and reference of the customs, the beauty of the observance will lift the consciousness to ineffable mystical experience. The weight of cosmic recognitions and intuitions of transcendent insight could become almost insupportable. It is a strange and illogical argument to contend that the profounder intellectual comprehension of the

rites would *diminish* their force and their moving power. While the outer historical significance is lessened or even entirely dismantled, the Nativity legend and all the mythical episodes of the

62

festival's background would be vested with a greater and more cogent aura of psychic pertinence than before. They would become lovelier than ever, since the mind has freighted them with meanings of dynamic import to the soul of the celebrant himself. They would bring their meaning and significance home to the individual and they would remain with him as a leaven of divinizing ferment from one Yule to the other.

The name, dignity and authority of "king" stands in much disesteem and disrepute in the world today. But the world sadly lacks the basis of that proper homage and worshipful reverence which it should never fail to accord to the true and rightful King of Righteousness, whose birth and later rising with healing in his wings the great Yuletide festival was set to commemorate. Until moderns can join their voices with angelic choirs caroling eternal praise to *this* King and thus by their own divine initiative seat him at last on the throne of the nations, the continued celebration of Christmas can avail little. Can there be any question whether it were better to hail a king in ancient Judea, or a king of Christly graciousness in the collective heart and mind of humanity? Human destiny hinges on the choice, as at this epoch in racial evolution the divine soul of humanity swings slowly around from outgrown animalism to the sweet charity of a heavenly grace on the solstitial "hinge of the sun."

The supreme message of the Yule is that we have been given, deep within the confines of our own natures, a divine babe of consciousness to raise from infancy to the fulness of the stature of his godly nature. His coming has linked us with the skies, for he is a child of celestial kingliness. Hence it is that the dominant note of Christmas joyousness is the uniting of our earthly voices with the choirs of heaven. Those choirs are chanting

63

halleluiahs in jubilation over the gift of heaven to earth; on her part earth must lift her voice to hail in utter joy the advent of her divine visitant from the empyrean. So the Yule resounds with the strains of "angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold;" of hosts of heavenly citizens caroling "Peace on earth, good-will to men." And, in the deepest sense of its sublime connotation, the symbolism of angelic hosts filling the skies of Christmas-time with soul-lifting music must be translated psychically into the realities of surges of mystical sweetness sweeping through the upper areas of the human soul. For the angelic voices that man can hear are the echoes in his own consciousness of the outpouring of divine radiations of Love and Light from the mind of God. And man in his upward march must ultimately provide the wondrous answer to the question couched in the lines of the Christmas hymn:--

Hark! What mean those holy voices

Sweetly sounding through the skies?

