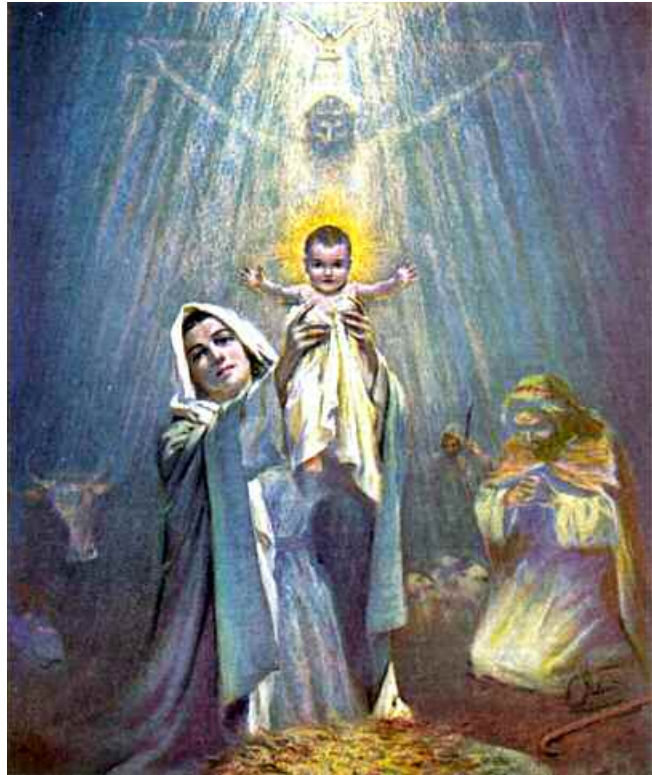


## *The Gift*

**C**HRISTMAS CELEBRATES the giving of God's Son to humanity as its Saviour, its very life. The birth of God the Son out of heaven worlds onto the plane of Earth took place roughly two thousand years ago. However, the annual gift of the rejuvenating solar or Christ impulse has been in effect much longer, beginning, we may surmise, from some time during the later Atlantean epoch when the law of uniformity gave way to the law of alternating cycles, to day and night, summer and winter. Yet longer with us has been the life-sustaining energy of our cosmic sun; and, in his remote past, man and his earth were one with the primordial elements of our solar system. Then, he was permeated by all the Beings, angelic and archangelic, who dwell and develop in the domain marked out by God the Father. Viewed in this light we may rightly ask, What has man that he has not received? What is man's that wasn't and isn't God's? Man is God's gift. He is the child of a great cosmic collaboration. He is the sublime work and outpouring of at least ten Hierarchies or Life Waves of Force-Beings. And specifically, at this point in his development during the Earth Period, man is the virtual gift of a spiritual Trinity whose essence he is gradually individualizing, thereby becoming ever more Self-defining and self-transcending.

The gift of the Father and members of his life wave (the Lords of Mind) in lower man is the nuclear stuff from which his mind is organized; in spiritual man it is the provision to exercise Will. All proceeds from the Father, even influences received



Ariel Agemian, courtesy Anrig Agemian Paley

*Called to Redeem*

by man from Thrones, Dominions, Principalities and Powers, since They work through the Father's field of Being and their influences are conditioned and specialized by Him in accordance with man's evolving needs.

The gift of the Son is the main impulse in the present development of man's spirituality and is the primary focus of our study.

The gift of the Holy Spirit, Jehovah and angelic hosts, is the capacity to impart spiritual truths which relate man to cosmic verities, especially to an understanding of the Christ Reality. It includes activating and nurturing various faculties for expressing this reality.

Thus man is the focus of an immense input and interaction of spiritual Beings, a living repository of Cosmic wisdom, creative power, and divine promise.

Yet, from no source has man received such impetus for liberation from material ignorance and the

freedom to be spiritually Self-discovering as from Christ. It is strange but true that Christ's gift to humanity was and is man's very own spiritual Self. The archangel Christ, through the human vehicles of Jesus, gave back to man what he was in danger of permanently losing: his I. Christ facilitates man's recovery of his spiritual identity as God's son in full Self-knowing consciousness.

Prior to Golgotha, man's consciousness was far more absorbed in the family, tribal and race soul or spirit. He was enmeshed in purely temporal and obligatory relationships. His primary identity was based in the blood inheritance, relating him not to God the Father but to Father Abraham and other Patriarchs. Through atavistic clairvoyance, pre-Christian man lived in the experience and person of his forbears and had at most but a vague sense of his individual identity. Thus endogamy, now taboo, was at onetime strictly enforced, for its violation was seen as a dilution and weakening of the blood bond, resulting in the dimming of ancestral memory and influence. Nor is blood influence today completely annulled, as evidenced by the numerous patronyms borne by persons designating them as sons of Samuel, John, Jacob, etc.; or simply as shown by the undue influence some parents continue to exert over their children long after they have ceased to be children. But the present age is noteworthy in this regard, for we are witnessing the democratization and individualization of blood, the atomizing of familial patterns and ethnic affinities through interracial marriage, the practice of blood transfusion, the frequent early rupture of parent-child ties, and generally the vigorous intercommunication of all earth peoples. Typically, youth of today insists upon early exercise of the privilege and responsibility of self-determination.

New Testament precedents for the restructuring of society on a basis of global equity and unity are not hard to find. The sword brought to separate father and son and mother and daughter (Matt. 10:34-5) is wielded on the premise that new allegiances and social priorities have no value or force in fact until old patterns are divested of their arbitrary valuations of love-exchange. Familial relationships now take on a more figurative or symbolic value, describing the particular quality or aspect of love-expression that is shared, as in a fraternal,

sororal, filial, paternal, maternal, or conjugal exchange. This generalization of relationship, its abstraction from a blood context, is signified by Christ Jesus when, in response to the message that his Mother and brothers desired to speak with Him, gestured toward his immediate disciples and said, Behold my mother and my brethren (Matt. 12: 47-50). The expanded context defines relationship in the household of the heavenly, the cosmic, Father: The new family consists of those who do the will of the Father; and ultimately, the family is humanity.

The Christ Impulse also has the effect of enhancing the status of the child, in part as given by the Gospel passage "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 19:14), and "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 18:3). Also, as prefigured in the Isaiah passage "And a little child shall lead them." The implicit teaching of rebirth in the New Testament reminds us that the child is an old soul (more or less) in a new body, which is most amenable to spiritual impacts while young, and therefore to be especially cared for that it may make optimum achievement and contribution during its earthly career.

Christ Jesus, then, embodying, as he did, all possible human relationships in His Being and antedating the regime of Race Spirit influence, is able to say to the Pharisees, the formalists: Before father Abraham was, I AM. Before my earthly affiliations existed, ever has been my spiritual essence, which underlies all outward identities and loyalties and shall endure beyond the sway and memory of them all. And toward that eventuality we recognize in the designation of *Friend* a synthesis and consummation of all temporal relationships: Friends in Christ and Sons of God the Father.

In the pamphlet *Christ or Buddha?*, forwarded by Max Heindel, the author addresses herself to the distinction between Brotherhood (the building of which is one of the three goals of Theosophy) and Friendship or Fellowship, in the sense advanced by the Rosicrucian Philosophy. From the time of Cain and Abel (blood) brothers have displayed notoriously unbrotherly sentiments. A necessity attends to blood relationship that can easily lead to

exploitation and triviality. Friendship, on the other hand, defines a *spiritual* bond based on conscious co-being in Christ as sons in the process of becoming one with the Father. The qualities expressive of Friendship are those described by Paul in his characterization of Love or Charity (1 Cor 13).

Christ Jesus overcame, in His composite being, the forces that work in the world to keep man pledged to the sectarian, the purely national or racial. Because this was and is so, a tremendous force radiates from the Earth's center, and is yearly reinforced, culminating at the Winter Solstice, impelling all humanity to live above and beyond the confines of special interest groups and parochial ties. Social distinctions and outer differences formerly regarded as crucial and tending toward the fractioning of the human family—exoteric religions, ethnic background, physical gender—are now increasingly seen simply as letters comprising the one global alphabet, as hues in the organic spectrum of that manifold yet unitary light which is humanity.

An apparent paradox of the I AM impulse activated by Christ is that while individual identity and power to grow spiritually through using individual faculties and forces is strengthened, that individuality has true being only in terms of the Christ Force and Foundation on which it is based and through which it works; which is to say, in terms of humanity, a living entity. The I is truly the I when consciousness conceives and lives its being as inseparable from the indwelling Spirit of the Earth and His Body, unitary Mankind, as it manifests in six billion souls.

The gift of the I AM, of the Self above form, is the gift of Love. It is the love that sacrifices the form for the life, the mortal life for the life eternal. The I AM expresses its true nature by living into life and relationship as THOU ART. The Christ in one relates to and calls forth the Christ in each other I.

Although for mankind the Christ has always been, the individual Ego's ability to perceive and commune with the Christ Reality has been a gradual and more recent accession. It would not have been possible for most humanity to attain to Christ realization without the voluntary self-immolation of Christ's higher consciousness and His descent into the cramped conditions of a human form. That

is, Christ, with the assistance of Heavenly Hosts, contracted His exalted Being into a form lower than He, through His own immediate power and experience, could crystallize Himself into. In a sense, Christ was practically frozen into a physical body. This metaphor describes the descent of Solar Spirit into the Earth at the Autumn equinox, culminating at the year's midnight, the Winter solstice. It is the gift of light to darkness, the revitalization of matter by spirit, the birth of the Christ Child in the human soul out of sight, in the homely surroundings of one's mundane being; where those at large may be none the wiser, though even the advent or awakening of a higher consciousness is sensed by the Herods of the world—the secular mind intent upon denying spiritual dimensions that its small ego may retain ascendancy in mere earthly matters. The Herod in each of us senses its imminent unthronement and strives with desperate measures to preserve its threatened rule.

The Christ gift ennobles the most material attribute of humanness—the dense physical body. For Christ deigned and dared to die into a mortal form. By so doing he purified the archetype of man's physical being (existing in the world of concrete thought) from below. He accelerated its pattern of vibration and refined its structure. He effected a catharsis of the desire body of planet earth from which man specializes the material for his individual desire body. And He quickened the life-field of Earth's vital body, thereby encouraging in man genuine service to all life forms and beings on Earth and facilitating contact in the reflecting ether with those ideas that urge planetary cooperation and work towards the transmutation of physical forms.

One benefit of the dignity bestowed upon the human form by the incarnating Christ is the suspension of merciless, often self-defeating, forms of self-overcoming, including severe fastings, varieties of austere bodily and emotional punishment, strict sensory deprivation, monastic seclusion, unusual physical exercises designed to mechanically dissociate the higher vehicles from the dense physical instrument. All these practices were rendered obsolete, even injurious, to spiritual progress, particularly for the Western aspirant. The daily demand made on the aspirant to live a life of selfless service in and of itself most adequately pre-

pare the Ego for consciously functioning in his higher bodies.

Christ Jesus demonstrated in his ministry that greater spiritual powers are required of him who lives in the midst of worldly circumstance, maintaining his spiritual bearing and consciousness, than are demanded of him who would advance spiritually by withdrawing from the rigors and riot of daily events. The obvious good such a one realizes for others far surpasses that of the devotee bent exclusively upon personal liberation. Christ's word and example teach the higher, more expedient, spiritually healthier form of attainment through giving, through doing not for self but for others; thereby is the higher Self most effectively served.

The life of Christ in Jesus was an utter giving of Self away from self, a sacrifice even of His highest consciousness of Being for the upliftment of lower conditions of consciousness. For since the evolution of Christ and members of his archangelic life wave never required functioning in a body composed of matter denser than desire stuff, his descent to physical form and consciousness signified a reduction in expression remotely analogous to that experienced by man were he to take on and express through plant form and consciousness to render some service to the near insensate beings of that life wave.

We know, and daily it is good to know anew, that we receive what we give; while what we set out to get for ourselves is taken from us. So that the example of the life of Christ Jesus illustrates a law of nature, a law of spiritual economy. It is based on self-sacrifice born of love. This is the keynote to growth and spiritualization of consciousness. What one gives earnestly, selflessly, of himself contributes to the advancement of the recipient, the giver, and the whole being of creation into which the giver and receiver are membered. This truth is expressed by the Saviour in a Henry Lowell poem: He who gives *himself* with his alms feeds three—himself, his hungry neighbor, and Me. Thomas a Kempis hears Christ speak: "Whatsoever thou givest, except thyself, I regard not; for I seek not thy gifts but thee." And Paul in 13 Corinthians identifies the same essence of giving: "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it



Oil on canvas, Andrea Previtali (active 1502, died 1528), National Gallery, London

### *Salvator Mundi*

*God so loved the world that He gave Himself as love for the world's very life. The giver of life gave the whole substance of His life.*

profiteth me nothing." The gift is love and love gives of its life, unstintingly. Yet, ironically, selfless giving to others is the greatest gift we can receive.

We know the value and at times nigh impossible challenge of being ever ready to give that which is most loved by us, as Abraham was ready to sacrifice Isaac, if it be the will of the Father principle in us, or if the Love-Wisdom principle, the principle of Christ sacrifice, so directs us. For in one light I AM is the Father or Abraham and I AM THOU is Christ-Isaac: as given in the passage, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son." He gave His Life, His Love, His Manifestation or Logos. We, in our lives, in our way, may imitate and enact this cosmic principle of sacrifice, the giving of the progeny of our being, our love. Our only-begotten son is our personality, our formed person: all that by which we are known. We give this to the God of our Higher Self. This we may dedicate to the will and service of the indwelling God, one with the God of creation.

Geophysically, it is interesting to note that the maximum gift comes at the time of outer poverty,

at the time of visible light's greatest retraction. The inner life is rejuvenated when the outer life is going through a kind of death throes or metamorphosis. A period of intensest wakefulness in consciousness, a remembrance and forward-seeing of spirit-being, is polarized by a kind of sleep or forgetting, a dumbness or rigor mortis on the physical plane. For the gift, though given, is yet fully interior, germinal, discerned at the moment of epiphany only by the wise ones, those endowed with inner vision. As a seed-focus of light radiates like rootlets of concentric waves from its vital center until it pulsates to the circumference of normal recognition, so shall the gift of Christ Light and Life be a matter of public record only when the sun rises from out of the midwinter cardinal earth, intercepting the field of outward vision at the spring equinox. Then man can openly attest to the force and effect of the Christ gift, to the resurrection of life, to a prior midnight birth on earth, to a silent planetary sacrifice.

The gift is already given. Our need is not for new revelations, more occult truths. Rather we ever need to reawaken what we already know; to enkindle our inner being with the fires of zeal, aspiration, and enthusiasm; to dedicate our outer persons and our daily mentality to the high purposes which we in centered moments consciously espouse, else our philosophy counts for little and we demean it with mere lip-service. For this is what the Christ achieves for the Earth: A yearly re-birthing—and more: The planetary vehicle into which He descends is increasingly refined and made more amenable to spiritual influences. Thus it is with us: As we give continuous rebirth to the Teachings by entering into them with our heart and mind and body, and by incarnating them in our daily lives, we spiritualize all our members and the members of Christ's body—humanity.

Christ's gift is an ongoing dynamic reality, an ever-increasing giving. He is giving us to our higher selves. Our gift to Christ is of like nature. We make it possible for Him to recover more of what He is as sublime spirit. His presence actually promotes our ability to give to Him and to our total environment.

A bright facet of the Christ gift is that it makes possible spiritual access from the place where one is. At one time spiritual attainment had a much

stronger geographical or topographical determinant. Types of initiation were determined by the location of the Mysteries, which, before their degeneration, were centers of angelic and archangelic influence. Inner plane investigations reveal that even Jesus prepared his vehicles by taking initiation in the various areas that determined their nature, each, we may assume, emphasizing primarily the spiritualizing of one of man's four lower instruments. Thus Jesus was directed by the Essenes to Persia, India, and Egypt. But Christ spiritualized and globalized the initiatory way. He made it nondenominational, international, nonspatial. The life of Jesus and primarily of Christ in Jesus serves as the pattern for planetary imitation and initiation. Truly this is a gift to all humanity, to *whomsoever will*. Christ Jesus incurred the hostility of and provoked fear in the Pharisees largely because he made spiritual truth and opportunity public and open to all. No longer were they to be hoarded as some treasure to be dispensed to a powerful elect, a priest class. For Christ taught not through the authority of outward office and worldly appointment but by the authority of the very Will of God the Father, from the promptings of the God within, the selfsame God immanent in all Egos. This marks a stupendous change of focus, and if today we observe trends toward tolerance of faiths and a melding of ways, we can point to the Christ Impulse as being at the heart of this movement towards religious synthesis and holism.

The gift of God, of Himself (which we call Christ) to man had the effect of deifying man, for the example of Christ in Jesus, God in man, demonstrates that man is co-heir of God and Son of the Father. The gift is a spiritual patrimony, an invitation to reign over creation, to share in the Love, Wisdom and Light of the Creator.

Old Testament man was given material benefits befitting his needs and level of development. Later he was given promise of heavenly benefits. Later still God gave the ultimate gift: the Son: Flesh of His Flesh, Spirit of His Spirit, that man living in, with, and as the Christ might know the Father.

The warring nations of our various desires, the proud individualism of self-concerned thoughts—all the unruly elements in man's lower nature shall in time be brought under the control of the spiritu-

alized will and harmonized by the one Life and Love that is Christ in man and mankind.

If we would be Wise men, we may give the gold of our spiritual selves, the myrrh of our garnered soul power, and the frankincense of our purified physical beings for the complete expression of the Christ forces working toward birth and growth within each of us.

This is another paradox of the gift: To fully receive it we must fully give it. The gift is. We make it an active force in our selves by giving it, by living the sacrifice of it. Love shows the way. It is the phoenix. It determines its own cancellation or utter dispersion from its center. In result it finds itself re-established, regenerated, greatly extended, glorified. Our gift to God through Christ is in daily, moment to moment, living the reality of His immanence, relating to Him as the finest and highest presence of each relationship and content of our immediate awareness.

During the eons of time measuring his involutory journey down and away from God-consciousness, man has been scarcely other than a receiver, an enrapt witness, as in a waking dream, to the work and play of celestial hosts moving in and molding the body-garments of his manifold being.

In time man came full face and flat up against the blank wall of impenetrable matter, a spiritual orphan, a stranger to Heaven, unremembering of true Light, spiritual Love, eternal Life. He lived in the little and was alone....God knew. God saw. And His boundless Love incarnated for Man in the redemptive Being of His Son, the Archangelic Christ, that man might have Light to illumine consciousness on the other side of material opacity, might have an example to emulate, might participate in a Love so strong and pure that it can burn through any spiritual torpor and selfish resistance.

Involving man received, was utterly given to. Evolving man gives. His evolution spiritward is empowered by consciously experiencing the Love and Wisdom that are the very life and substance of his sublime instruments and then concertedly, fully, giving thereof, returning all, compounded and transfigured, offering all to the Christ Who gives all.

By dint of the Jesus and Christ accomplishment, each spiritual aspirant is a primary focus of the sacred drama that is narrated by the church calen-



Oil on panel, ca. 1664. Philippe de Champaigne. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

### **Gabriel's Annunciation to Mary**

*The angel that conveys a message from God to the Virgin is, esoterically, an intuition from the three-fold spirit to the purified personality indicating the birth of the inner Christ, which, in its fullness, is the completely individualized Life Spirit.*

dar. He lives into his Bethlehem and toward his conscious Baptism in Spirit. He lives the career of Christ in steps hallowed by that Holy One whose most profound contact with Earth and its humanity is celebrated on Christmas Day, when earthly forms are most ethereal and Spirit life is most condensed and accessible.

The birth of the Christ-consciousness in each Ego's Bethlehem is the critical point on the path of self-conscious return to God. It is the dawning of spiritual light. If we have not already, let us now close the chapters on our Old Testament, with its merciless law and its wrath; its self-justifications and calculated pieties. Its work has been accomplished. Its message has been taken to heart. We have long been prophets of the Advent. Now let us live into the Annunciation. Now let us consecrate our beings and lovingly serve the reality of the Nativity. Let us cherish, honor, adore and tender this newborn Being, as it is found in ourselves and in each other; let us nourish it in all possible ways, that it may spiritually prosper and prove itself ever more worthy to receive in larger measure the divine consciousness of the Father which is in Christ. □

—C.W.