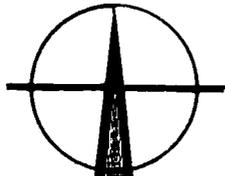


BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT
REFORMED YOUTH*

December, 1974

Christmas Math
The Incarnation





BEACON LIGHTS

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Editorial

The Secondy Pistle of Gramps to Jack and Jill

by J. M. Faber

Dear Jack and Jill:

If I remember correctly I mentioned in my last letter that I intended to comment on the news from the grapevine that you twins were thinking of getting married, but that the letter was getting too long and that I would do so in my next letter. Alice in Wonderland's walrus said, "The time has come to speak of many things", and the time has now come to speak of marriage. So, you are thinking of getting married! Gram slyly put in her penny's worth by saying that she opined that Jill was *thinking* of it about two years before you were, Jack. Right, Jill? We also have heard that you are "twinning" this experience, too, by staging a double wedding. Great! But we understand that the date has not yet been set. That is fine for then you will have some time to think of all the implications of wedded life. Or are you too overwhelmed with the idea of "being in love" to make such considerations? But "being in love", though a necessary ingredient in a Christian marriage, is an emotion of the mind which spills over into our other members. Emotions, you know, have their ups and downs; they wane and ebb, and at times can change so radically in a few moments from "love" to extreme "hatred". (see II Sam. 13:15) But Love between a Christian man and wife is a matter of the heart, from which it spreads throughout the whole person, the entire being, heart, mind and spirit.

Marriage is a creation ordinance, a "built-in" part of the creation of the first man in Paradise. And Adam was led to understand his aloneness through the God-given task of naming the animals which all appeared before his face in

pairs! Mates, if you will. In that lesson he learned that to be a complete "man-organism" he needed a mate so that they *two* could be "one flesh". Christ, while sojourning in our flesh and blood, taught this in no uncertain terms. And though He could not speak from personal experience He did speak from Creational experience. He, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, created that ordinance. He "invented" it and He built it in when, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He *him*; male and female created He *them*." Gen. 1:27.

Now this "one flesh" idea is not to be considered as a mechanism like a watch which is made up of several parts and assembled together to make a time-piece. Rather it is like a violin and bow which make one musical instrument. One organism. Neither one of those two parts can function as a musical instrument, but both working together in their respective "offices" make beautiful music.

That marriage union cannot be dissolved. That is, the Christian marriage cannot be dissolved except by one means, death. True, some churches allow divorce freely; some more reluctantly; but our churches view divorce as a most serious operation like the amputation of both legs, instead of a mere dissolving of a partnership.

The Christian virtue of chastity is one of the ruling factors in a Christian marriage. It is of prime importance, but I suppose at this stage you abhor the very thought that you might lose that virtue. Unfaithfulness is farthest from your thoughts, but don't imagine that Satan will not tempt you to fall into a violation of that virtue. There is another virtue

which ought to be seriously considered. That is *justice*. That is the virtue of keeping a promise. When you say your vows before the minister (and you are so very eager to do so) you are expected to answer some questions. One of those is the vow, solemnly made before God and witnesses, "until death do us part." Mind you God hears that as a solemn vow from which He will not release you "while you both shall live". And you do mean it from the bottom of your soul; or are you trying to deceive someone: your lover? your in-laws? or God? That modern un-Christian viewpoint is so prevalent in novels, newspapers, and among work-fellows, it is likely to color your thinking too. They say that divorce and remarriage is merely a readjustment of partners whenever they think they do not love their mate any more. or when one or both "falls in love" with someone else. Then one sees two virtues violated, chastity and justice. And if it is true what you have heard that love, or "being in love" is the sole reason for keeping a marriage intact, then the idea of keeping a promise cannot be considered. If love is the whole thing then a promise cannot enhance the union. But a promise of constancy is an integral part of being in love. Lovers *want* to promise each other that it will be for life! This is not imposed upon, but inherent in, being in love. The minister is not going to ask you to promise to be "in love" until death do you part. It's about living holily with one another, and reverencing and obeying.

Now a quick look at "women's Lib". That is a gimmick which Satan uses to nullify the marriage ordinance. Make no mistake about it: the man *is* the head of the wife in the creation-built-in. And, Jill, that is the way you *want* it. You surely could not reverence a husband who relinquishes that office. And if that bit about "reverencing and obeying" seems to place a heavier burden upon the wife than the husband carries, think about the husband's vow to love his wife AS

CHRIST LOVES THE CHURCH. Christ loves His Church when she was (is) least deserving of it. The terms, "in sickness and in health"; "for richer or poorer" does not mention, "when she least deserves it".

Have I pictured a too-gloomy look at your intended step? NO. I was only trying to prepare you for pitfalls and stumbling blocks which may be in your future *because of your sinful natures*. The more holily you live, the richer your walk of sanctification, the smoother will be the sea of matrimony. With the Word of God for your chart, and with the Savior stilling the waves, and the love of God intertwined with your conjugal love, you are in for a beautiful experience and a lifetime of untold and unmeasurable joy!

* * * * *

That is what I was going to write, and I did, but that was a month ago. Time slipped by and I did not get the letter mailed. Now we have heard that the day has been set, Christmas Day! What an appropriate day! The day in history in which our Savior took upon himself our flesh and blood in order to prepare the way to take unto Himself His Bride! I almost envy you for having chosen that date. Looking back I would have liked that for our wedding date.

Before closing this letter I must tell you of a trip which Gram took in which she experienced a most wonderful change of scenery. She was taken to the airport in a heavy downpour, with dark clouds lowering almost to the ground. We wondered if the plane would take off in such adverse conditions. But it did. And soon (Oh, much too soon!) it was out of sight. But for Gram it was a sudden change from the dark cloud into the bright noon-day sunshine when the plane broke through. The sky was azure blue and the light was dazzling to her eyes. What looked like a danger-of-death experience turned out to be a transition from darkness to a marvelous light! Of course you understand that this story is only a

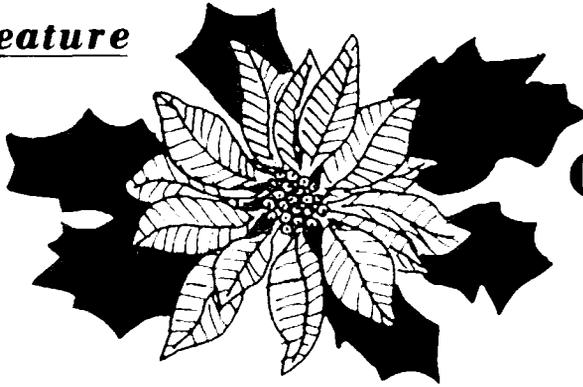
metaphor. The Trip Gram took was from this world of the darkness of sin and pain into the heavenlies. Home! Where there is no need of the sun for The Son is the light thereof! Seeing Gram is not going to come back from that Trip I will guess what advice she would have given you had she been here when I finished this letter. I'm sure she would have said; "Be

generous in your praise, spontaneous in your sympathy, and stingy in your criticism."

I am looking forward to sharing your wedding supper with you knowing that Gram is enjoying the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

Love, Gramps

Feature



Christmas Math

by Cal Kalsbeek*

* Cal is a member of our Hope Church and teaches at Adams St. Christian School.

No, Christmas math isn't another numerical system. It is rather our old base ten system being used to examine various attitudes toward Christmas. But, it will analyze more than that for we cannot really distinguish between our celebration of Christmas and our whole world and life view. They are one. How we celebrate Christmas is simply one way in which our world and life view is revealed for all to see.

In this article I present four simple equations, each dealing with what I see to be the attitude of a particular person or group of persons toward the birth of Christ. I will then explain how I arrived at each equation. (If by this time you are totally confused, read on things may clear up.)

$$\text{Equation \#1: } 1 - 0 = 1$$

This equation, I believe, pretty well describes King Herod's attitude toward the birth of Christ. From Herod's viewpoint there was only one king, no one else counted. Anyone who interfered or showed any sign whatsoever of invading his kingly domain was permanently disposed of immediately.

If we look only at the numbers themselves, we have to agree that the equation is correct. This does not mean, however, that Herod is right. You will notice that the subtraction operation is used to denote Herod's attitude: his was a negative attitude with regard to the King of heaven and earth. When you use the wrong operation, you get the wrong answer. That's Herod's fallacy.

$$\text{Equation \#2: } 0 + 1 = 1$$

Can you read the equation of the Shepherds? We are humble shepherds, the lowliest of lowly, absolutely nothing in ourselves. However, we have a King and

for him we forsake all, even if it means leaving our sheep in the wilderness to celebrate His birth. We are united one with Him by God's grace.

Here we have another example of an equation which is numerically sound, this one, however, is clearly a positive one which reflects the positive attraction of the Church to Christ (Don't forget the one-sidedness of this attraction as suggested by the equation: we are 0).

$$\text{Equation \#3: } 1 - 0 = 1$$

That looks familiar: Herod's equation all over again. I'm glad to see you are alert. You are right, the equation is the same, but it's not Herod's. This is the equation of the wicked world among whom we live today. Basically they think no differently than did Herod: there is but one king and that is man. Any idea about a heavenly king must be discarded immediately.

On Christmas the world celebrates Christ's birth all right, but in their celebration they reject the real king by replacing him with an impostor. The mind of the world hasn't changed since Herod. They are still consistent, but consistently using the wrong operation, and therefore consistently wrong.

$$\text{Equation \#4: } 0 + 1 = 2$$

How about this one? Immediately we sense imbalance; that's good. What isn't good is that, as I see it, this is the equation of many Christians today. Can it be? We certainly wouldn't believe an equation such as this. Is it possible that our lives

would reflect such an equation? Let's take a closer look. You will notice that this equation is similar to that of the Shepherds. We are nothing, Christ is our only King, but the answer two kings just can't be right. Or can it? Yes, we piously claim to be nothing and we speak of Christ our King, but does the way we live show it? Does the way we celebrate Christmas make it clear, or are we assimilating the equation of the world into our celebration? It appears to me that we attempt to take the king of the world along with the King of Kings. It simply won't work. Either man is king or Christ is: one or the other.

Is there a solution to our inconsistency? There is, but not apart from grace. Consider the impossibility of the Shepherds doing what they did apart from grace. We as they must selflessly commit ourselves entirely into His care, imploring the Throne of Grace for humility. There alone is the consistency which can cover all of our inconsistency.

Only on the strength of that grace can we live antithetically in all our walk here on earth, including our celebration of Christmas. Then we don't ask those silly questions, "Why can't we do this?" or, "Why can't we do that?" Instead by grace we ask, "Why must we...?" When we ask the proper question the answer is clear as well: we *must* because there is only one King and all our life must be devoted to His service and the worship of Him. Let us, therefore, worship Him in Spirit and in Truth, this Christmas and always.

The Incarnation

by Mrs. Betty Ekema*

* Mrs. Ekema is a member of our Hope, Redlands, Church.

Again our hearts are filled with joy
As, in a special way

We celebrate our Saviour's birth,
Well known as "Christmas Day".

Our thoughts are drawn to Bethlehem
The place of Jesus birth.
The Son of God, incarnate

To dwell upon the earth.
He left His home in glory
In flesh here to abide.
Obedient to His Father
God's will He satisfied.

For man had deeply fallen
From his perfection state.
No longer was he free from sin
As him God did create.

For God is just and holy
He's righteous, He is light.
He can have no communion
With sin that's dark as night.

Sin cannot go unpunished
For God is truly just.
He's righteous and He's holy
So to punish sin He must.

But, God had a chosen people
Elect 'ere time began,
From eternity He loved them
So, salvation was His plan.

He promised our first parents
That from their seed would rise
A Saviour, a Redeemer,
Who truly justifies.

The prophets too foretold it
That Christ would come some day.
That He must suffer much, and die
To take our sins away.

Expectant parents used to hope
Their babe would be a boy.
For he might be the promised Christ,
The thought filled them with joy!

And then, four hundred years went by
Without a single word.
It looked like David's line ran dead.
It seemed nothing was heard.

But, God is always faithful;
His covenant shall endure.
He never fails His loved ones.
His promises are sure.

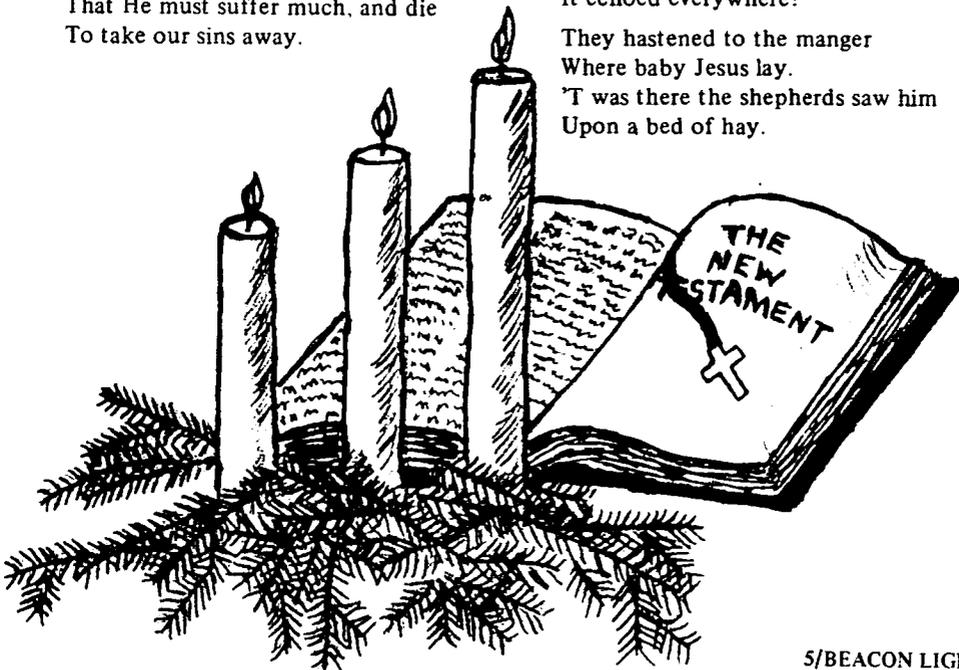
For an angel came to Mary
And told her of God's plan.
She asked, "How shall this be
For I know not a man?"

Conception by the Holy Ghost,
A miracle takes place!
Then, virgin birth, God's Son in flesh.
A wonder of God's grace!

The shepherds heard about it
As they watched their flocks that night,
From an angel, then a chorus,
Oh what a wondrous sight!

It seemed the heavens opened
As their song rang through the air,
"Glory to God in the highest",
It echoed everywhere!

They hastened to the manger
Where baby Jesus lay.
'T was there the shepherds saw him
Upon a bed of hay.



In swaddling clothes they found Him
'T was such a lowly birth!
Humility surrounds Him.
God's own dear Son on earth.

There was the virgin Mary
Who was so richly blessed
To be the Christ child's mother.
And this she too confessed.

It seemed there was none other
In David's royal line

To be the mother of our Lord,
Our Saviour so divine.

Oh the depth of love and mercy!
Grace, redemption so complete.
How we marvel in amazement
And fall prostrate at His feet!

We can never understand it
We shall never cease to tell
The wonder of "The Incarnation"
God with us, Immanuel.



Truth vs. Error

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

Ready-To-Halt

I am Ready to Halt. – David (Ps. 38:17)

This man is a pattern of every Christian. He was a Mephibosheth, lame on both his feet, and that not merely from childhood, but from birth! In one respect, he is a picture of every man, incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil. A picture he is, a character in a story, without family tree, not great enough to have a recorded genealogy. David, who said "I am ready to halt," made mention of his mother when he said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." But the name of Ready-to-halt's mother is not important, nor how, when but a few months old, he learned to walk on crutches. Of much less point is there in

knowing whether a kind carpenter made his first crutch, or of what wood it was carved. The story does not pander to mere sentimental curiosity. But it is no sickly sentimentalism to wonder how Mr. Ready-to-halt got to be a stranger and a pilgrim, how a cripple like him could get through the Slough of Despond, up the Hill Difficulty and past enemies like Apollyon and the Giant Despair.

We first meet Ready-to-halt at the door of Gaius, who loves to entertain the saints, and there at that door he finds Mr. Feeble-mind and Greatheart conversing. Mr. Feeble-mind discovers Mr. Ready-to-halt with his crutches to be the most fit companion for him in the journey which

they happily decide they shall take together. Their company was led by Great-heart and Mr. Honest, followed by Christiana and her children, with these shaky two, naturally, forming the rearward. So here is a Mr. Nothing-in-himself, weak, with no legs you could really call legs, those he had being really only his crutches. He had no hands to hold them, except with a grip inspired from above. In his crutches you have the secret of this man's life. Ready-to-halt's use of crutches are his leaning on the promises of God. He went nowhere without his crutches.

Do you know how it is with a lame man? Normal men give not a thought to standing up to walk or to run. But the lame man must wait until his crutches are brought him. Then slowly and agonizingly he hauls himself upright on his crutches, to, with great labor, stagger on his way. The Christian lame man knows he has no godliness in himself, no inherent graces, nothing of self to stand upon or even partly lean on. If he is a true Ready-to-halt, he is absolutely and always dependent on the promises of God. The promises of the gospel found in the Scripture are his very life. Take away his crutches (God's promises) and Mr. Ready-to-halt is just a pile of doll-rags. He takes not one step unless upon a promise. So with his crutches, step by step, he could slog through the Slough of Despond, scale Mt. Clear, smash the head of Beelzebub, until at Jordan he almost grudgingly relinquished his crutches for the chariots of fire there awaiting him. While on pilgrimage, whenever he fell into a hole, he dug his way out with a crutch. Fellow-traveler, you dig?

Our Lord, when He came here, was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, like unto His brethren, yet without sin. He, then, made himself like Mr. Ready-to-halt. For He accomplished His sojourn and finished His work leaning on His Father's promises. Isaiah, often very bold, prophesied that Messiah, when He would come, would have to be held up (41:10,

13: 42:6), encouraged, comforted and sustained by the Trine Jehovah. Indeed, the land of His sojourn was the proving-ground of every crutch, rod and staff of promise which He tested with His whole weight upon them. He found them serviceable, supporting and sufficient. Ready-to-halt's crutches had already borne the testing and weight of divine stress. They would assuredly hold him. David said, I am ready to halt. Jacob became a Ready-to-halt after his wrestling with God, so learning, at last, that he overcame, to prevail with God, not by his own strength, but by taking hold of God's strength (Gn. 32:31; Isa. 27:5). The prophet Malachi reveals that this same word *halt* (limp) refers to Israel. The Israel of God is Ready-to-halt! (4:6-7). It limps through this world, hanging its helpless soul on God. Not that it has strength even to cling to Him, but it is a matter of "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe!"

Ready-to-halt has left his mark in the world. The dot of his crutches is found on no by-path, on no wrong turn. You see those crutch-marks on a cold, murky day? Follow them as a straight guide-line in your pilgrimage to the heavenly city. Put your feet down in the prints of those crutches. On your way, more than one Ready-to-halt with crutches ought to be a comfort to you. The Christian is not The Invisible Man, but he does have an invisible means of support; he is a man with invisible crutches.

When Doubting Castle of the Giant Despair was finally destroyed, Christiana and her daughter provided music with viol and lute. Mr. Ready-to-halt with one crutch in hand took Miss Much-afraid with his other hand and they both danced fantastically.

Ready-to-halt comes to his end when a heavenly postman informed him, "I come from Him whom thou hast loved and followed, though upon crutches, and I tell thee that He expects thee at His table to sup with Him in His kingdom next day

after Easter. Therefore prepare thyself for this journey." The King would have at His table this beloved Mephibosheth with the assurance, "Fear not, Mephibosheth, for I will surely show thee kindness, and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually." Thereupon, Mr. Ready-to-halt gathered his traveling companions about him to inform them, "God has sent for me, and surely will for you also soon." He had Mr. Valiant-for-truth draw up his will. His crutches he bequeathed to his son, with a hundred loving wishes that he would handle them better than he had. His son was a pilgrim from his cradle. Like his father, he rocked out of cradle to crutches. "From an infant thou hast

known the holy Scriptures." Like Abraham, like God's covenant people, in the line of generations, he received from God, and he as good as dead, a child of promise. Have you ever looked down into your babes' crib while they peacefully slept in the dark of night to whisper a prayer of thanksgiving for covenant seed? and to pray, Thou hast not dealt with me according to my sins, nor rewarded me according to my iniquities? Is it your will to leave your crutches (the inspired promises) to your son, your daughter? Does your will express it that you would have them handle God's promises better than you have?

Contribution

Lord, Make Me An Instrument!

by Karen Karsten*

* Mrs. Karsten is a member of our Faith Church.

This prayer at times can become a cry. Life sometimes is so raw, so brutal. Its experiences, whether of death, defeat, or failure are often so difficult to deal with and so hard to face. Yet, we must face them. We are forced to look to see the tragedies in our own lives and in the lives of others. And when we do, the skies of our own man-constructed worlds grow dark as we witness our dreams or parts of our lives crumble and fall apart. It is at such times that life becomes too difficult to deal with. We can only see what we have lost and so we set up again and again the broken remains which never again will make reality. Sometimes our life style reflects this brokenness within us. We may wander aimlessly and without purpose from job to job, from home to home, or from church to church. Or some of us will drive ourselves endlessly in pursuit of forgetfulness, never stopping to examine

the wounds or bind them up. And others may force themselves into a bitter, hard mode of life, striving to make themselves believe that their hearts are not so injured after all. And yet, at some time, the pretense, the covering-over must end. We must re-face and re-live those tragic experiences in our lives.

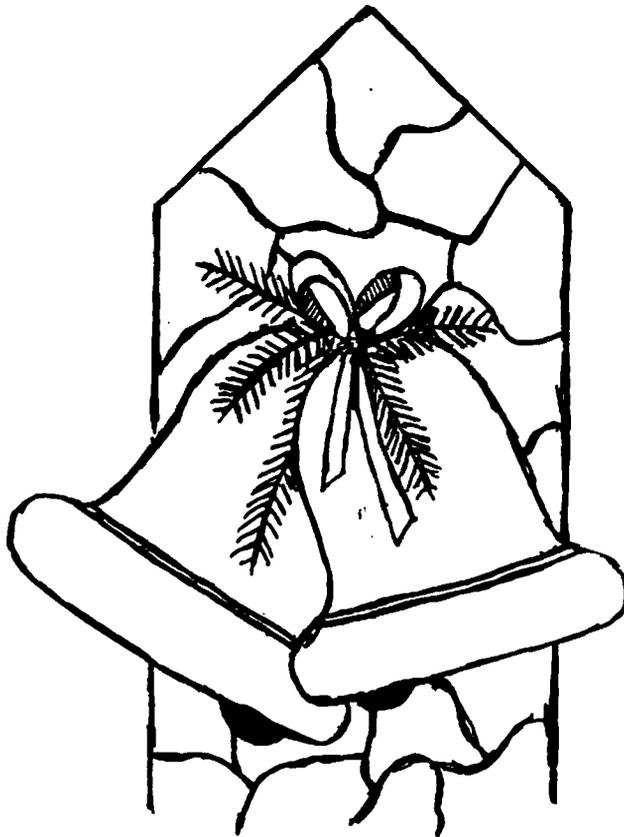
It is Christ who forces us to look again. He turns us around, abruptly sometimes, sometimes gently and helps us to re-evaluate those shattered moments in our lives. But now when we see those anxious days of despair, we see a small woman - broken, tired, and sick - reach out and touch the hem of Christ's garment. And we hear a great Christ say in love "Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." And then when we feel again the great anguish of loss that tore apart our hearts, we can see beyond the limited scope of our lives and view again a dark, lonely garden where great drops of blood fall from the forehead of the great Christ and hear again those words "O my

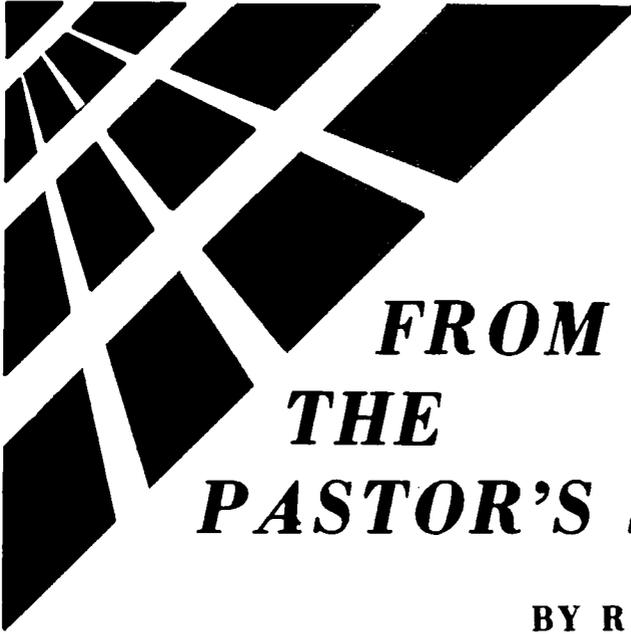
Father, if it be possible . . . Yet not as I will, but as thou wilt." Or else when we are forced to gaze again on the dying face of a loved one, we can with tear-stained faces look up and there see silhouetted against a dark sky a wooden, nail-studded cross and hear again the great voice fill the darkness saying "Into thy hands, Father, I commend my spirit."

It is here at the foot of Calvary that life finally begins to make sense again. No human betrayal, no loss, however so grievous, is beyond the healing power of the Christ of Gogatha. This healing power of Christ works in our lives not just to make us forget but to make us believe, simply and whole-heartedly just as the woman who received healing through

Christ's garment. It works in our lives also to make us accept those tragic days as means to display God's glory and will and to make us pray as Christ did before us "not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Finally, that great power of divine healing works in our lives so that we may be able again to see beyond our own lives to the sorrow and grief in the lives of God's children everywhere. It is not easy to shut the sorrow of others out of our own lives when we have experienced that same sorrow. And in learning to enter into the grief of others, in learning to console, in learning how to love, we learn to live with the constant prayer on our lips and in our souls "Lord! Lord! Make me Thy instrument!"





FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

BY REV. G. LUBBERS

"Thanks be to God for His unspeakable (inexpressible) gift"

— II Corinthians 9:15

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another"

— I John 4:11

God's Unspeakable Gift of Love

At Christmas time our thoughts should be of God; they should be truly God-centered thoughts! They should be thinking His thoughts after Him. We should not be thinking of our tinker-toy gifts for the Lord and for one another. That is often a very shallow and superficial busyness; mere tinsel and decorative wrapping paper, methinks. It often does not rise above that which is a great weariness and vexation of spirit. In a word: it does not satisfy. We should be thinking of God's thoughts of peace, which are higher than our thoughts, and of His way which leads through the holy place. We should think of the manner of God's love to us poor, helpless, sin-ridden and guilt-burdened sinners. It has been said "take Christ out of Christmas" and you have no Christmas, but I will add: take God out of Christ and you have no gift of God. For

on Christmas we think of Immanuel, God-with-us!

God has an unspeakable gift. You may understand the text in II Corinthians 9:15 to refer either to the "exceeding grace of God for you", or to God's eternal Son Himself, whom God did not spare; but in either case, the gift is unspeakable. O, yes, you can speak of it in human language. But you cannot exhaust the subject. You are dealing with the Mystery of godliness which is great. God is manifested in the flesh. Here is infinite love, rich mercy and powerful and sovereign grace manifested in the flesh. Here is fullness of grace and truth which no thought can fathom; it has depth which no line can measure, and which no human ken can search out or express. No one has ever told all that is implied in this love and gift of God to the end. It is higher

than heaven and deeper than hell. It is God's inexpressible Gift!

We were going to do a little thinking about this inexpressible gift were we not? Take the shoes from off your feet; we now tread upon holy ground. We are going to hear what the Holy One of Israel, the Lord of hosts says about this gift, in which he gives Himself. The key for these few stammerings of mine is given in I John 4:11 "Beloved, if *thus* God love us. . . !" I could try here to multiply the adjectives and the superlatives. But the gift will remain still inexpressible. So I had better in thankfulness ascribe all the praise to the Lord and listen to the exposition of this infinite love in finite words as given by the Apostle John.

First of all, God is love. He is love in His very essence. It is a virtue of His divine will. It is the bond of perfection of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This love is perfect, infinite, immense, fathomlessly great. God is love as He is light and there is no darkness in Him. It is for this reason that love is out of God. He is the eternal fountain, full of the rivers of life and goodness. The riches are from the river of God, which is full of water.

Secondly, do you desire to see where this gift of God was manifested? It is manifested in God's sending of His only begotten Son. It was manifested in this Son whom God sent into the world, in order that we might live through Him. We see this love and gift of God when Jesus lies wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger. Angels are hovering over-head in the very heavens, and shepherds worship and the virgin Mary and Joseph believe. Mary ponders all these things in her heart. Here is the unspeakable gift of God. And, thanks be to God, while He was bringing his only begotten Son into the world, the mighty Caesar Augustus must have all the world be taxed. These are some God-centered thoughts!

Thirdly, do you desire to see how the love of God operates, the love which God

is, which he always remains the fountain of, and which he manifested in the sending of His Son? Then notice carefully that the operation and the power and efficacy of this love is never from us to God: love never has its *starting-point* in us. It is not that we loved God. That is not the unspeakable gift. If that were the case this love and gift of God would not even exist. That would be pure humanism. No love is such emphatically, that *He* loved us, and that He sent His Son a propitiation for our sins.

Such is God's unspeakable gift of grace.

It is God's superabundant gift of love to us.

Now go and purchase your gifts for those whom you love in this love of God. Think of your enemy when you buy your gift. Yes, love the brother in all his imperfection; show in your life and giving much mercy, love, longsuffering and patience. Place coals of fire on the head of your enemy. Do not merely do good to those who do good to you. If God did that there would be no unspeakable gift. Heaven would not be heaven echoing and resounding with the praises of the redeemed of all ages.

Whom shall I give a present? Do not forget the poor and the indigent. May your Christmas gift be an expression of your love which is out of God, and may it be an infallible proof for yourself and others that you know God, that you love the brother. Let your heart be in it. Such gifts don't require a special evening called "Saint Nick's Day". Life is then not in two different spheres, the secular and the spiritual. It will be cut out of one cloth with the true religion, which is visiting widows and orphans in their afflictions, and keeping ourselves unspotted from the World. We then learn the spiritual art of making friends from the unrighteous Mammon, that presently we may be received in everlasting habitations.

Christmas-time is a good and fitting time to work out your own salvation with

fear and trembling. It means that we then experience the power of God, who works in us both to will and to do of His good-pleasure. Yes, we will then have the same mind in us which was in Christ, who for our sakes became poor that we might be made rich. He who did not deem it a matter of robbery to be equal with God took upon himself the essential form of a servant. He made himself of no reputation. Let that mind be in you, my youthful and beloved reader.

How much is too much money spent for gifts? If you do not spend it in God-centered thoughts of God's love, and the operation of this love in yourself, little or much makes no difference. All that is not out of faith is sin. Now, go and buy your gifts in the love of God and make friends in the eternal habitations.

The subject has not been fully expressed. But that is God's design in His great love, His unspeakable gift!



CRITIQUE

Famine!!!

by Agatha Lubbers

Famine!!! The very word terrifies us. It strikes fear in our souls. We're afraid of famine because it suggests hunger and starvation.

Most of those who read this article do not really know what hunger is. We have some vague notions about hunger pangs but we have never experienced the excruciating pain of hunger. Our experience does not include the results of hunger. When we view such results on the pages of the daily newspaper or see them on the television screen, we are relieved to be able to quickly turn the page or be "comforted" by a contemporary American chef, proclaiming the inalienable "right" Americans claim to "HAVE IT THEIR WAY."

Famine and starvation are signs of the end of the world. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that "there shall be famines, and pestilences in divers places" at the end of

the world. These are the beginning of sorrows. (Cf. Matthew 24:7b, 8.)

Time magazine in a special section entitled "The World Food Crisis." November 11, 1974, says:

"Nothing is older to man than his struggle for food. From the time the early hunters stalked the mammoths and the first sedentary "farmers" scratched the soil to coax scrawny grain to grow, man has battled hunger. History is replete with his failures. The Bible chronicles one famine after another; food was in such short supply in ancient Athens that visiting ships had to share their store with the city; . . .

"Every generation in medieval Europe suffered famine. The poor ate cats, dogs and the droppings of birds; some starving mothers ate their children."

"After World War II, however, it seemed that man at long last was winning the battle against hunger. Bumper harvests in many nations, notably the U.S. . . . Then in the past two years, this

optimism turned to despair as hunger and famine began ravaging millions of the poorest citizens in at least 40 nations."

"Nearly half a billion people are suffering from some form of hunger; 10,000 of them die of starvation each week in Africa, Asia and Latin America. There are all too familiar severe shortages of food in the sub-Saharan Sahelian countries of Chad, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Upper Volta and Niger; also in Ethiopia, northeastern Brazil, India and Bangladesh. India alone needs 8 to 10 million tons of food this year from outside sources, or else as many as 30 million people might starve."

As a young Christian of Reformed persuasion, what do you say to all of these forecasts and predictions? Do you understand them? Do they frighten you?

Once God in His eternal wisdom and providence sent the slave-boy Joseph into Egypt. That young man, named in the "gallery of the saints" of Hebrews 11, was an instrument in the hands of God to preserve Egypt and other nations from starvation during seven years of destructive famine. However, the central purpose of God was to preserve the chosen nation of Israel. In this way the people of God were preserved. Christ, who was the only begotten Son of God, was to be born from Judah.

How do you understand famines today? You have never been affected directly by the famines described in *Time*. The countries affected by famines are in Asia and Africa. You and I live in a nation which has more food than any other nation even when this year's harvest seems to be disappointing. We live in a nation which harvests more grain than any other country and is able to export more grain than any other country even though agricultural experts now question whether widespread starvation can be prevented.

Famines are one of the signs of the end of all things.

In Revelation 6:5-6 we read: "And when he (the Lamb, who is Christ) had opened the third seal, I heard the third

beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, a measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine."

Revelation 6:8b tells us: "And power was given unto them over the fourth part of earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."

This sixth chapter of Revelation tells the Church of Jesus Christ about the four horses that run in the midst of the earth. The kingdom of Christ cannot come unless these horses run and accomplish the purpose for which they are sent. Christ sends these horses in their courses for He is the Lamb who is able to break the seals. He sends forth the white horse conquering and to conquer. He determines the running of the red horse. "I come not to bring peace but the sword." (Matthew 10:34). Christ initiates the stalking of the black horse.

What is this black horse?

The black horse represents a contrast between bare subsistence and luxurious living. Its color represents scarcity, want, drought, and famine. The rider is represented as one who carries a balance. He carefully weighs, and as he weighs with this balance, a voice is heard saying: "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny." These measures constitute the equivalent of one man's subsistence for a day. The toiling man, who barely exists, can only buy the bare necessities of life. At the same time the oil and wine are not diminished. Oil and wine, which are symbols of luxury and relaxed living, present the complete contrast with the bare subsistence living of the poor. Many of these poor are members of the "Third World." That's the contrast we observe today.

Contrast the luxury of our lives in twentieth century middle America with

that of the hordes of the Third World. Asia and Africa are starving. Contrast the luxury of those living in nominally Christian nations with those who live in countries controlled by pagan religions and pagan philosophies.

God in His all-wise providence has placed us in such times as these. Do we observe? Do we understand?

Faith says that all these things must occur so that the kingdom of God can be established. The final realization of the kingdom of heaven, which is the terminal or goal of all of history, is the reason for famines.

Christ, who is the Lamb has broken the seals. The vials of God's judgment are being poured out. Christ has made it possible for the black horse to run. It is Christ, by whom all things consist (Col. 1:17), that causes the black horse to stalk the cities of the world.

The running of the black horse is not pleasant. The running of the black horse affects all men without distinction. People of God are not exempt from social upheavals, scarcity, and famine. The child of God lives in the same society as the child of the Devil. But the child of God is fundamentally different. He does not raise his hands in rebellion with the people of the world. That which is evil to the world is not evil to the child of God.

Famine causes the child of the Devil to rise in rebellion and to curse God. Famine causes the child of God to bow in humble trust. He submits himself to God. He learns to be patient and says by faith in the midst of these signs:

"Come Lord Jesus, yea come quickly."

Once God saved a people in sovereign wisdom so that Christ could come. Now there are famines. Christ is coming.



NEWS From, For, and About Our Churches

by Karla Kalsbeek

ATTENTION TEACHERS

Redlands California's Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School is seeking a Principal (Grades 5 thru 9) and a teacher (Grades 1 thru 4) for the 1975-1976 school term. Send inquiries to:

Mr. Otto Gaastra, Secretary
917 Campus Avenue
Redlands, California 92373

From our Doon Church

Public confession of faith was made by Eugene Van Den Top and Alvern Miersma on September 29.

The membership papers of Beverly Hoekstra were received from our Loveland Church.

Beverly Van Den Top and Duane Netten were married September 13.

From our First Church

Mr. and Mrs. Larry Looyenga rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Melissa Ann, on September 27.

The membership papers of Rev. Arie den Hartog and wife Sherry and daughter Sara Maria have been transferred to the Prospect Park Protestant Reformed Church.

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Faber have been transferred to our Southwest Church.

At her request a Certificate of Dismissal has been sent to Mrs. James Gerritsen, nee Mary Pastoor.

At the request of Mr. and Mrs. D. Vander Kodde, a Certificate of Dismissal has been sent to their home.

From our South Holland Church

Miss Henrietta Haak has requested membership. She comes to us from the Oak Glen Christian Reformed Church.

At her request the membership of Twyla Brummel has been transferred to our Loveland Church.

Robert Hoving is now stationed in Okinawa. His address is:
Robert Hoving Jr. Hm3
Hts/Hts Reg. Dispensary
3rd FSR, FMF, Pac.

FPO, San Francisco, California 96602

Debra Rodden and Paul Haak were united in marriage October 25.

James Lenting and Frank Van Baren made public confession of their faith on October 27.

From our Holland Church

On September 8 Susan Windemuller made public confession of faith.

Mr. and Mrs. Carl Weemer were blessed with the birth of a daughter on August 26.

Public confession of faith was made September 29 by Nancy Cammenga and James Vander Kolk.

Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Windemuller were blessed with the birth of a boy.

Sandra Cammenga made public confession of her faith on October 13.

From our Hull Church

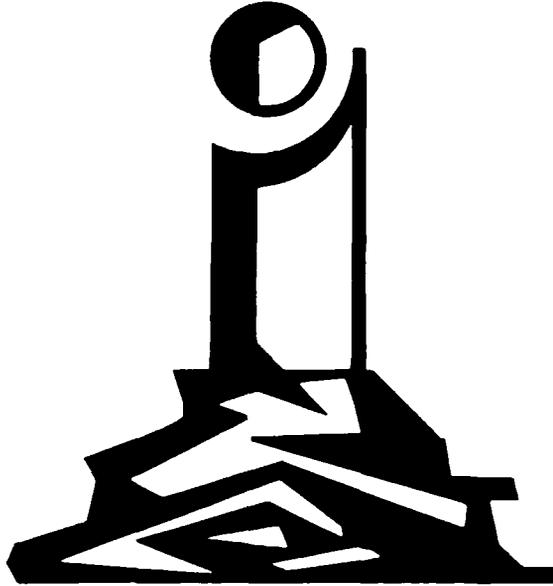
The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Rod Brunsting and child were transferred to our Doon Church.

The papers of Mrs. Alvin Bylsma were sent to her home upon request.

On October 27 a Reformation Day Singpiration was held in Hull Church.

From our Hope, Walker, Church

The membership papers of Mrs. Gerald Dykstra, nee Theresa Hoving, and Mrs. Greg Engelsma, nee Elaine Karsemeyer, have been received from our Hudsonville Church.



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