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# Integrity

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## Integrity

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# HE IS OUR PEACE

HOY LEDBETTER

Isaiah saw him as the Prince of Peace. The heavenly host viewed his incarnation as "peace on earth." But it was Paul who uniquely joined peace to him when he said, "He himself is our peace." His statement in Ephesians 2:14-18 provides the answer to one of the most urgent questions man faces today. Let's read all of it:

**For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.**

## . . . a unique approach

How can we have lasting and complete peace? We can have it when we are incorporated in Christ. He himself is our peace. He is not merely a center around which a multitude of pacific followers can congregate. He does not simply demand that his disciples work together and love one another as much as they can. Nor did he start an organization dedicated to promoting peace. Any human leader might do that. But his approach is unique: he himself *is* our peace. This means that Jesus himself is the ground and substance of unity. Nobody else is like him, and nobody else could be like him. What he did, he alone could do.

## . . . the test of His power

The Ephesian passage tells us just how powerful he is in making peace: he brought together the Jews and the Gentiles. Anyone who could do that could reconcile any other groups on earth, for there has never been greater hostility. The Jews had a sign in the temple which made their feelings about the Gentiles very clear. It read, "Let no one of any other nation come within the fence and barrier around the Holy Place. Whosoever will be taken doing so will himself be responsible for the fact that his death will ensue." They had shut the Gentiles out under penalty of death. Their law, which originally was intended to protect their nation from the contamination of heathen idolatry, had become the bitter root of hatred of all other nations. This hatred was plain.

The Gentiles had similar feelings about the Jews. Anti-Semitism is not new; it had been building up among the Gentiles for hundreds of years before Christ came. The

enmity of which Paul spoke was the crown of centuries of hostility. But Jesus tore it all down in one fell swoop when he died on the cross. Surely if he could do that, he can make even the most belligerent among us to beat our swords into plowshares.

Underlying this hostility, which is representative of all that has ever divided man, was an estrangement from God. Before they could be in harmony with each other, they had to be in harmony with God. And this reconciliation Jesus effected through the cross. "He reconciled them to God in one body through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity."

## . . . a new kind of man

But what was the secret of Jesus' success? How did he make such men brothers and cause them to love each other enough to want to die for each other? He simply made both groups into one. He did this, not by some organizational incorporation, but by making of the two one new man. Not just one man, but one *new* man. "New" translates the Greek *kainos*, which means new in quality. They became not just a new man, but a *new kind* of man. They were no longer Jews and Gentiles; they were Christians. "Behold the secret of all true union! It is not by others coming to us, nor by our going over to them; but it is by both them and ourselves coming to Christ" (Monod).

## . . . no distinctions

That all are alike in this one body is a fact stressed repeatedly in the New Testament. For instance: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are

all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). It is said that the Jewish male thanked God daily for three things: that he was not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. Christ erased that from the prayer book. One cannot be a Gentile, a slave, or a woman in Christ. He also cannot be their opposites. These distinctions are all eliminated. Of course, some of us want to keep them. Our class pride, racial strife, and debates about woman's role in the church inspire us to try to maintain social, racial, and sexual distinctions. But Paul says they are gone. We are all one in Christ!

Since we are all one in Christ, unity is no mere attribute of the church. It is not just a quality which the church has; it is rather the very substance and essence of the church. The church is *essentially one*. All our divisions are therefore abnormal.

## . . . a radical change

When Christ put to death our enmity, our self-centered desires and impulses were killed. The bellicose disposition, which has no place in the new fellowship, was slain. If a Nicodemus asks how these things can be, the answer is that such a transformation can only be possible when we have undergone a radical new birth. We must go to the cross and be inspired by that superlative symbol of affection. The astonishing love which we encounter there will teach us to love. And when we are born of the Spirit, our constant fellowship with the Spirit will provide us the dynamic for loving superbly.

## the Spirit's unity . . .

The Holy Spirit is frequently associated with peace and unity in the New Testament. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). "If there is any

fellowship of the Spirit . . ." (Phil. 3:1; cf. 2 Cor. 13:14). "We both have our access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:18). "The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Ro. 8:6). "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . ." (Gal. 5:22). "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Ro. 14:17). These passages, inasmuch as they associate unity with being in the Spirit, form a background for viewing the important statement that the Christian is to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:4). The word *preserve* implies that unity is something we already have. It is produced by the Holy Spirit. Our job is not the impossible one (for us) of creating unity; it is rather to guard it against internal and external attempts to destroy it.

#### . . . one ground of concord

This shows us why the Christian approach to unity is unique. All other efforts to unite depend upon the ability of contentious people to bring themselves together; but Christian fellowship rests upon divine power to remove hostility. This difference explains the failure of so many unity movements. We can never get together by means of discussions and debates and creeds and organizations, whatever value these may have in apologetic and evangelistic contexts. *Our differences will never be worked out at the conference table; they must be settled at the cross!*

#### . . . what the Spirit says

What we need today is not so much to hear the voice of the visible church as to listen to "what the Spirit says to the

churches." This is precisely what the early church did, and that explains how the Jews and Gentiles could rise above exceptional enmity and live in one fellowship. A good illustration of this is in Acts 15, the chapter which records the intense debate at Jerusalem over circumcision. The Pharisaic brethren had followed Paul to the Gentiles and had, contrary to his teaching, insisted that his converts were required to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses in order to be saved. Because they had not yet learned that in Christ the war was over, they caused no little trouble and provoked a convocation of the whole church to settle the question.

#### . . . only these essentials

The letter which conveyed to the Gentile churches the decision of the assembly at Jerusalem included these words: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials . . ." (Acts 15:28). In saying "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" they indicated their respect for "what the Spirit says to the churches." We are often divided today because we refuse to stop with laying upon others "no greater burden than these essentials."

Alan Stibbs says in this connection, "It is high time that in some quarters today there was a fresh willingness to acknowledge that, if it has seemed good to the Spirit of God to work in saving and sanctifying power in congregations and through ministries different in their ways and character from our own, it ought also to seem good unto us not to trouble our fellow-Christians with doctrines and demands, whose acceptance is clearly not essential to salvation in Christ, and to living communion with Him" (*God's Church*, p. 76).

That the divided church is impotent to save the world is often pointed out, but (as V.A. Demant has well said), "It is not only that we are weak because we are divided: we are divided because we are weak." Because of our spiritual weakness the essential *koinonia* is lacking. Our religious life is too sterile to know peace as a fruit of the Spirit. And our carnality has so distorted our vision that we see the kingdom of God as consisting of something other than "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." The solution is not debate and ecumenical organization. What we need is *regeneration*.

#### . . . the question

Since, even after many centuries, we are not united, we must face the question as to why our practice lags so far behind our theory. How can we have peace when there is no peace? I will answer with some observations.

First, Paul knew from painful experience that all hostility had not been removed (he wrote Ephesians from a prison cell). But he also knew—as a Jew who had embodied the very enmity of which he spoke and had had that bitter hostility slain in his own heart—how powerful Christ is in breaking down barriers. I think James Stewart is right in saying nothing amazed Paul more than the way in which the age-long feud between Jew and Gentile vanished before the name of Christ.

But Christ's power has been limited by the visible church, which, since it is part human as well as part divine, has always included those who were not willing to die with him. Discipleship is impossible unless we deny ourselves and take up the cross and follow him. 2 Tim. 2:13 illustrates what it means to deny ourselves: "If we are faith-

less, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny himself." Christ would deny himself by ceasing to be what he in fact is. That he cannot do, but it is exactly what we must do. To follow him we cease to be what we are. But too many members of the visible church cannot stop being Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female—or what have you. As long as the church contains this human element there will be division. "We are not weak because we are divided; we are divided because we are weak."

In the third place, we must remember that Jesus said he came not to bring peace on earth, but a sword. The gospel is in itself divisive. It sometimes attracts persecution. So unity can only come to all when all are in Christ.

#### . . . facing the carnal mind

It will be helpful to us to remember that Ishmael always mocks Isaac. "As at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also" (Gal. 4:29). The truly regenerated will always stand apart—perhaps in their own congregations. Spirit-led brethren will inevitably engage in activities and ministries in which the carnal will have no interest and may even actively oppose, but they should not be surprised that Ishmael persecutes Isaac.

Our reference in such matters should be none but the Lord himself. If we listen to "what the Spirit says to the churches," we need not be disturbed by what the visible church says. If we are loyal to the one Lord and to his truth, we will have his approval; and while the approbation of others is desirable, it is not essential, and it will not be inevitable until all are born again and have the mind of the Spirit. ●

# Taught by God to Love

CHARLES STELDING

**“About love for our brotherhood you need no words of mine, for you are yourselves taught by God to love one another” (1 Thess. 4:9 NEB).**

The knowledge which we have about brotherly love has come directly from the mouth of God himself. We do not learn about this love from Holy Scripture or from the words of an apostle; such teaching is not necessary. What we read in the Bible concerning love for brethren is only a reminder of what we have already received from God. We have been taught by direct revelation to love one another. This is the expressed statement of the Apostle Paul and we must not weaken or empty it of its meaning.

To be taught directly by God had a very special meaning to the Jewish people at the time of Jesus. They believed that when the new age of the Messiah would come at the end of time, God would speak to them face to face and instruct them about the Law. This idea originated from such Old Testament passages as Isaiah 54:13: “You shall all be instructed by the Lord.” Jesus mentions this same Scripture and relates it to himself when he says that we are drawn to him by God’s own teaching. “Everyone who has listened to the Father and learned from him comes to me” (Jn. 6:45). The prophet Jeremiah dreamed of a time in which God would write his law “within them and on their hearts . . . No longer need they teach one another to know the Lord; all of them, high and low alike, shall know me, says the Lord” (Jer. 31:33f.). The New Testament

says that this new “law” is the new covenant under which we enjoy a special relationship with God (Heb. 8:8-12).

Thus, when Paul writes that we are taught by God to love one another, he is saying that this new age of the end-time is now happening. The divine promises of old are now being fulfilled. Just as God wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone with his own finger, so he has written his new “law” on our hearts with his own handwriting. Jesus says the new commandment is to “love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34). To love God and your neighbor as yourself is the summary of the teaching of the Law and the prophets (Mt. 22:34-40). This new law is taught to us by God himself. It is within us, written directly in our hearts by God’s own hand.

We cannot deny that nothing less than a miracle takes place when God puts this teaching within the souls and hearts of brethren. This love is not a human quality which the Christian gains by his own efforts and abilities. Instead it is a gift of grace from heaven itself. It is a divine, eschatological, supernatural love. The Apostle Paul expresses it this way: “God’s love has flooded (literally: “poured out into”) our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us” (Rom. 5:5). In 1 Corinthians 13 love is the greatest of all charismata (“gifts

of grace”). This celestial, eternal, miraculous charisma of love will never cease (1 Cor. 13:13). At least on this point most brethren will agree. We must be careful and not rationalize or demythologize this spiritual gift or reduce it to a human accomplishment, but simply receive it with thanksgiving and admit it as a reality within us. We cannot explain how God does this from on high. It must remain a mystery. We can only say that all brethren receive this teaching from God about his love “through the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5).

We know that at the very center and foundation of the Gospel stands God’s teaching about love. The death of Christ for us while we were yet sinners proves God’s love towards us (Rom. 5:8). The love of God which creates a new reality among men is also the source of our love for brethren. We are able to love and accept our brother in his weaknesses because God has taught us through Jesus Christ how much he loved us while we were weak and sinful (1 John 4:7-12). Paul reminds us to “accept one another as Christ accepted us, to the glory of God” (Rom. 15:7). We must learn to tolerate other brethren in spite of their shortcomings, just like we have learned to tolerate ourselves, because we ourselves are not yet what we should be. God’s charismatic love allows us to forgive our brother in all of his mistakes, without counting the number of his sins (Mt. 18:21-35). We can welcome all brethren without reservation or suspicion even when they fall away and return in repentance (see the parable of the Prodigal Son, Lk. 15:11-32).

Too often we forget God’s teaching written on our hearts. Our forgetfulness causes jealousy, religious pride, self-righteousness and lack of understanding for the opinions and knowledge of other brethren. We are too quick to talk about each other, to be suspicious, to condemn and to excommuni-

cate our brother because of his weaknesses. We are instead reminded by God to lay down our lives for our brother and to open our hearts to him (1 John 3:14-17). Thus, brethren who are striving to unite Churches of Christ in the various divisions of the past and making forums of discussions for reconciliation are fulfilling this divine commandment.

It is easy to love only those who are lovable. That is only an earthly human love. Divine love—love taught by God—opens the way to the unlovable brother, to accept him, serve him, receive him into fellowship. Who knows but that this “unlovable” brother is exactly what God wants? Perhaps this brother is not actually intolerable but is only so in our own eyes. It could be that he is God’s messenger to us and we are not willing to listen. Perhaps we *need* the brother who has a different outlook and opinion of things. Is it not possible that *we* are the “unlovable” brother and lacking in understanding of the truth? Isn’t the point where our brother disagrees with us really the very point where we need him the most? Isn’t it there that we need to re-examine our thinking and walk more carefully? We earnestly need churches where honest disagreement is allowed and open discussion encouraged. Only in this mutually trusting atmosphere of give and take can we become fully aware of our blunders and come to a better knowledge of the truth.

The relationship of love between brothers in Christ should be very easy. But our experiences throughout church history and in our own churches have proven that it is a most difficult task. For this reason Christ intervenes with his marvelous grace and lets this miracle take place in our hearts. God himself inspires us through the Holy Spirit to love one another. It is at this point more than at any other that we need to listen to God’s direct and divine revelation. ●

# SWEET MYSTERY

WORDS AND MUSIC BY JEAN OWEN



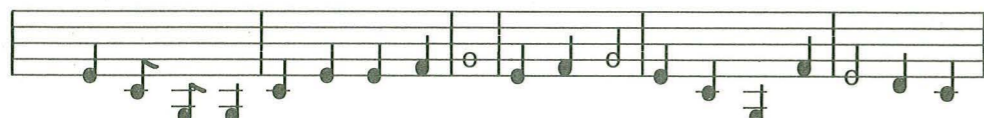
1. God the Fa-ther and Christ the Son; Add the Spir-it and yet there's but one.



Sweet mys-ter-y of love di-vine: By one we are loved, yet by three we are blessed.



2. From heav-en a-bove came forth the Word; Grace and truth a-bound-ed in him: Born



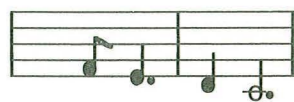
of a wo-man, be-got-ten by God, Per-fect Son of man, pre-cious Son of God.



3. Through the world blows the Spir-it, un-shack-led and free, Help-ing, com-fort-ing, liv-ing



in me — Spir-it of truth, sweet Teach-er is he — Though by deeds con-demned, yet



by grace re-deemed.

## CHORUS



In the Spir-it, in the Spir-it, In the Spir-it there is joy, sweet joy!



Touch me, cleanse me, live with-in me: Through my life Christ's love will shine.

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## LOVE

DAVID HYDE

Because true and abiding love for God and fellow man is so very difficult for us, as mortals, to obtain, and because it is sometimes very costly to a person, it has come to have a host of counterfeits. These counterfeits are mainly a way by which the rewards and honors of love may be obtained without the effort and sacrifice of loving. One of the most obvious rewards of love is being thought of as a good, kind and generous person. Apparently this may be obtained by professing religion, joining the church, giving money, and attending regularly. This is indeed much cheaper and easier than being kind, and true, and faithful and considerate in the home, on our jobs and elsewhere. Yet Jesus tells us that unless we have love in the close and intimate relations of our everyday lives and in dealing with our fellow man, all the "symbols" of love's presence elsewhere, all "services rendered" for other than these pure motives, become nothing more than

empty movements in the hazy world of self-indulgence.

As Christians we should have a creed. That creed should be Christ and him only. Some have said that their creed is the Bible—which is a valid and profitable statement in its context. But some have decided that their particular interpretations on certain points are to be a test of fellowship, and these points have thus become a creed in themselves. It is a gross perversion of the Bible, God's Holy Book, to obligate a person to agree on each of these before he can enjoy the most intimate Christian fellowship, or to test Christian character by what has become a man-made formula for salvation; and the attempt to make it a test of church membership is sure to confuse intellectual and spiritual things, to the serious disadvantage of both.

The most sensitively honest men will find it harder and harder to enter the service of the Lord when these stumbling blocks are put in the way. The pure spirit of love will win the devotion of all honest hearts and candid minds. But the insistence on a dogmatic formula is sure to repel an increasing number of thoughtful, devoted Christians from the fellowship of the "brotherhood."

# CHRISTMAS FOR THE CHRISTIAN

## *Its Meaning and Challenge*

DON REECE

“. . . for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”  
Luke 2:11, 12

“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself . . . and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”  
2 Corinthians 5:18, 19

“For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”  
2 Corinthians 4:6

One of the most moving stories which I have read in some time appeared in last year's Christmas edition of *Guideposts*. After noting that her sister, Lee (“Hard-Hearted Hannah” when it came “to spending company money”), and her husband, Chuck, were partners in a heating company in Chicago, the writer went on to tell of how one day about a week before Christmas when the company was swamped with calls a woman had phoned in tears to say she had no heat. She lived in a West Side ghetto, and for several hours had been phoning one company after another, trying in vain to get a repairman to work in a black neighborhood. Chuck was sent to answer the call.

He returned some hours later to suggest they forget the charges, and to tell of what he had found — a widow with seven little children, all thin from hunger and shivering

in rags in a cold and nearly bare house. When he asked one of the smaller boys what Santa Claus was going to bring him, the child had replied: “Ain't no more Santa Claus. Mama say he die, no use to ask him for any toys, cause he is dead, and we ain't gonna get none anyways.”

The next morning when Lee called in to say that she would be late, Chuck and the writer seized the occasion to slip away downtown for some shopping. Then, the car loaded with candy and toys, they drove to the West Side ghetto, where they found the children wild with joy, the widow smiling through her tears, and Lee (“Hard-Hearted Hannah”) pinning a star on a fragrant fir tree and asking her open-mouthed partner: “Well, what took you so long?”<sup>1</sup>

This story points up, as few things I have read, not only the glory and beauty, but also

the tragedy of Christmas. And in so doing, I am persuaded, it also points up its meaning and challenge for us as Christians.

### An Annual Message of Hope

Christmas, in spite of the paraphernalia and commercialism that goes with it, is *not* just another holiday, but an annual message of hope. To a world that is as cold and poor without God as the poor, bare house of the widow, Christmas is an annual reminder that it need not remain in such a despondent condition. To those who otherwise would be “strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12), Christmas says that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5:19), that in the person of Jesus of Nazareth he “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), and that “from his fulness” we have “all received, grace upon grace” (John 1:16). For Christmas is—never mind the question of the actual historical date—the commemoration of that Incarnation.

### “Christmas at Babbitt’s”

Unfortunately, to a large part of our world, God has, for all practical purposes, become as dead as had Santa to the little boy. And in all such homes and lives Christmas has become as meaningless as it had in the home of the widow. To some it has become nothing more than a time of gay lights and tinsels; to some a pathetic attempt to find happiness in the giving and getting of things; and to others a time to be spent in revelry and wild debauchery. Its tragic emptiness is vividly summed up in the following lines from the pen of Henry H. Tweedy:

On Christmas eve they filled the house,  
Some fifty guests all told,  
(O little Lord of Christmas,  
Were you left out in the cold?)

And ate and sang, played cards and danced  
Till early morning light.  
(O little Lord of Christmas,  
Did they think of you that night?)

Next morning came the presents  
On a glittering Christmas tree.  
(O little Lord of Christmas,  
Was there any gift for thee?)

. . . .

Then came some teas, a movie,  
And at night the last revue.  
(O little Lord of Christmas,  
What had these to do with you?)<sup>2</sup>

### “Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

To us who are Christians, then, Christmas becomes both a time of thanksgiving and a time of challenge—a time of thanksgiving for the grace and love we know as children of God, and a time of challenge to go with his love to those who know him not. And that “going” can take many forms—a literal going (as did Lee and Chuck) to the poor and dispossessed with material gifts and blessings; a letter or card to some lonely friend or acquaintance; or a joyous and bold declaration, both from the pulpit and in our daily conversation, of our faith in the Incarnation. The meaning of Christmas has been expressed in many different ways by many different people. For the Christian, however, its glory and its challenge is perhaps best caught up together in the Kingston Trio's arrangement of an old Negro spiritual:

*Down in a lonely manger  
Jesus Christ was born  
And the Lord sent down salvation  
That blessed Christmas morn.*

*Well, you can go, go, tell it on the mountain,  
Over the hills and everywhere;  
You can go, go, tell it on the mountain:  
Jesus Christ is born!<sup>3</sup>*

1 Pat Sullivan, "A West Side Christmas Story," *Guideposts*, XXV/10 (December, 1970), pp. 3-5.

2 From "Christmas at Babbitt's" in *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, edited by James Dalton Morrison (New York: Harper and Row, 1948), pp. 167, 168.

3 From "Tell It on the Mountain," by Mike Stewart; recorded by the Kingston Trio on *Something Special* (Capitol ST 1747), Side 1, Band 4.

## LONELINESS AND LOVE

CRAIG M. WATTS

Ours is a lonely world. Our songs and paintings repeatedly proclaim this message. The cries of mankind force this fact to our attention. As our cities grow ever larger our circle of close friends seems to grow smaller. Though overpopulation is one of the main threats to the future of mankind, in the midst of the crowded streets numberless individuals are alone.

The loneliest place on earth is not the center of a hot, dry desert or a small, unpopulated island in the South Pacific. It is in the midst of a crowd that does not notice an individual. This feeling is expressed in the poem "Totally Alone":

In a city of five million  
on a walk through crowded ways  
rushing, pushing, brushing, shoving  
through a life of endless days.  
Each man's crushed against the other  
but yet alone, without a brother.  
No one learns from the next man's mind,  
for each is to the other blind.  
In a city of five million  
how can one man stand all this?  
Yet each man knowing just himself  
is of others presence oblivious.

Millions of people are treading the same paths day after day, yet the paths are just as cold and unfriendly as they were twenty-

five hours before. The faceless people walk from place to place, each man refusing to acknowledge that the bodies around him have personalities and problems. Who has time to notice others? It's every man for himself! There are people around, nevertheless everyone is alone.

The saying "misery loves company" has little meaning to the lonely person. Thousands upon thousands of people are piled upon each other in tenement houses, with aching empty stomachs and no direction in life, but they find no comfort in the fact that their next door neighbors have the same problems. Nor does the man in a plush apartment on the other side of town, whose stomach is full but whose life is empty, find relief in knowing that the men he works with are also dreadfully alone.

Our deepest need is to be loved and to respond to love, and we will remain alone until that need is met. The presence of all the people in the world cannot remedy the loneliness of a man without love. We may surround ourselves with labor saving devices and time grabbing amusements, but all is vain.

We attempt to fill our emptiness with the limited love of other humans, but in order to gain another's love we feel that certain failures and faults must be hidden; so we don a mask. Yet we still remain lonely to an extent, because we realize the mask partially gained that love, rather than our real selves. We fear exposing ourselves. How can we dare reveal our faults and thereby free ourselves from the dreadful play acting without losing all love? Is there ever freedom from this constant pretending and the torturous loneliness it brings?

Are we who have the Way able to respond to the cries of the world? Is there a way to fill the loneliness man inflicts upon himself

by his acting. The voice of God bursts forth, "Fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ . . . God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:3, 5-8).

Here is love to fill any loneliness. Here is a relationship which is secure, not because we hide our faults, but rather it is perpetuated by our confessing them. Here is a love that is ours, not because of our perfection, but in spite of our imperfection.

Jesus offered love to the publicans, although "they were not admitted into society; nay, it was considered disreputable for anyone to be their friend and associate."\* He even chose one of these rejected social outcasts to be an apostle. Although they were loathed and lonely, Jesus became more than a friend to them; and a number of them accepted his love and were baptized (Luke 3:12; 7:29).

Jesus is the only way to freedom from the disease of loneliness; and if we truly desire to help the world, we must announce this Good News to the people on the streets, in the stores, in the suburbs, and in the ghettos. We have denied the love of God to this lonely world long enough. Too long we have been preaching a plan, and commandments, and condemnations. It is time that we look at ourselves and look at the world—and for the joy that we lack, look to God!

\* Davis, John, *A Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), p. 635.

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# Christmas

## Poems

Don Reece

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### CHRISTMAS IN THE GHETTOES

A star gleams white on a lamp post bare  
Where the lights of darkness forever glow;  
The streets lie cold in the ghostly glare,  
And cold is the wind as the drifted snow.

And the only song that we hear tonight  
Is the cry of the poor damned souls who  
dwell,  
Afar from the Holy City of Light—  
Broken and lone in the city of hell.

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### CHRISTMAS SNOW

The snow is silently drifting down  
In crystalline flakes from heaven above  
Wrapping the woodlands, the fields, the  
town,  
In robes that tell of his matchless love.

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### CHRISTMAS IN BABYLON

The Wind of Eternity blows and blows,  
(Oh my God, but the wind is cold!)  
It blows from the northlands across the  
snows,  
(The snows that are old as the mountains  
are old!)  
It blows where the City of Babylon lies  
spread  
All glittering with tinsel, and radiant, and  
dead!  
And cold is the wind as the snows are cold!  
Cold is the wind as the snows are cold!

The star on the street lamp shines bright in  
our town,  
(God of gay lights, but the wind is cold!)  
It lightens the way where the shoppers go  
down,  
(But old are the snows as the mountains are  
old!)  
And the silver chimes tell of a Christmas of  
white,  
And of reindeer that fly in the cold frosty  
light;  
But old are the snows as the mountains are  
old!  
And cold is the wind as the snows are cold!

The Star of Eternity shines from afar,  
(Merciful God, but the wind is cold!)  
It lightens the way to where shepherds are,  
(But old are the snows as the mountains are  
old!)  
And the movie stars sing of a sweet Holy  
Night,  
When the angels came down from their  
regions of Light;  
But old are the snows as the mountains are  
old!  
And cold is the wind as the snows are cold!

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And the Wind of Eternity blows and blows,  
(Oh my God, but the wind is cold!)  
It blows from the northlands across the  
snows,  
(The snows that are old as the mountains  
are old!)  
And our hearts and our souls are chilled by  
its breath,  
And our hopes and our dreams are shadowed  
in death!  
And cold is the wind as the snows are cold!  
Cold is the wind as the snows are cold!

Oh my God, but the wind is cold!  
Oh my God, but the wind is cold!  
Oh my God, but the wind is cold!  
*Oh my God, but the wind is cold!*

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### CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR —1972

*"And suddenly there was with the angel a  
multitude of the heavenly host praising God  
and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and  
on earth peace among men of good will.'"*  
—Luke 2:13, 14

We have sung the carols of the Savior's birth  
With the festal board heaped high;  
We have heard the angels sing "Peace on  
earth,"  
And have "seen his star" in the sky.

And now once more the midnight bells  
Ring out in "the frosty light";  
And far on the wind their music swells  
As the old year dies in the night.

And the new year comes, with the mid-  
night's chime,  
Afar through the falling snow—  
A page in Eternity's Book of Time  
Unstained by our sin and woe.

Shall we mar with our hate, our strife, and  
our sin,  
This year which the bells now ring?  
Or shall we go forth in his name to win  
The Peace which he came to bring?

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### HOPE FOR THE NEW YEAR—1972

I hear the sound of the midnight bells  
Ringing across the snow;  
The old year's passing their music tells—  
The year with its hate and woe.

And I hear the angels this New Year's Eve,  
That sang at the Holy Birth;  
They sing to my soul, "Look up and believe;  
There shall yet be peace on earth!"

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### SYMBOLS

The Song of the Angels is in the air,  
And the Star shines clear on fir and pine;  
The tree stands glittering, radiant and fair,  
On mantels and altars the candles shine.

Our town is filled with the Holy Light  
As far through the night the sweet bells ring,  
And the earth is wrapped in robes of white  
As pure as the love he came to bring.