

A Letter to Santa

Bennett Alfred Cerf (1898 – 1971) was a publisher and co-founder of Random House, a large English language general trade book publisher. Cerf was also known for his own compilations of jokes and puns, for regular lectures across the United States, and for his appearances in the panel game show *What's My Line*, which was one of my favorite television viewing habits.

He told a touching story of a father – designated a “dead letter man” – in a post office, who had been sorrowful and withdrawn from his family since the sudden death of his young son. At Christmastime, there fell into his hands this letter, addressed to Santa Claus by his little daughter ...

Dear Santa Claus:

We are very sad at our house this year, and I don't want you to bring me anything. My little brother went to heaven last spring. All I want you to do when you come to our house is to take Brother's toys to him. I'll leave them in the corner by the kitchen stove; his hobby horse and train and everything.



I know he'll be lost up in heaven without them, most of all his horse; he always liked riding it so much, so you must take them to him, please, and you needn't mind leaving me anything, but if you could give Daddy something that would make him like he used to be, make him smoke his pipe again and tell me stories, I do wish you would.

I heard him say to Mummie once that only Eternity could cure him. Could you bring him some of that, and I will be your good little girl.

(Signed) Marian.

What can be drawn from this little girl's letter? Here are some conclusions:

1. Represented here is agape, a Greek word translated into English as love, appropriated in Christian theology as the love of God or Christ for mankind. The word represents divine, unconditional, self-sacrificing, active, volitional, and thoughtful love. Marian was willing to put aside her own interests or desires to be sure that her brother was happy.
2. Her kind of love should be behind the gift-giving that will occur this Christmas season.

(more)

3. The Creator of eternity – time without end – can truly change people, as she wished for her father. It is accomplished through the Gift that God gave mankind that very first Christmas.

Thank you, Marian, wherever you are today, for a theological lesson we all need to hear.

– Beecher Hunter