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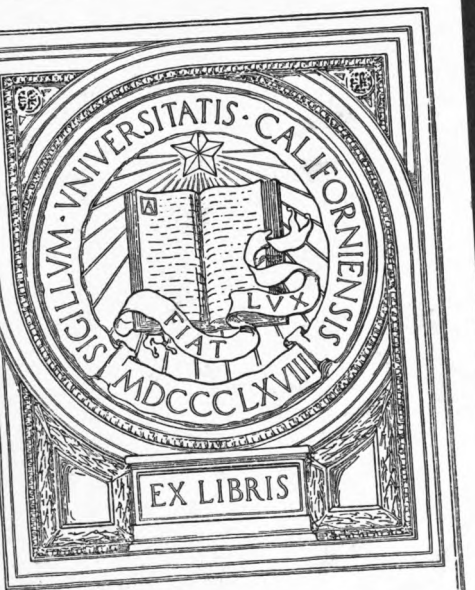
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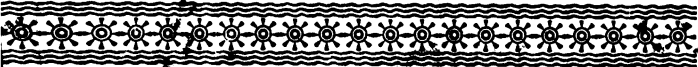


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Santa Maria, Cal.

TIMES BOOK AND JOB PRINT.

1892.

BV 4629

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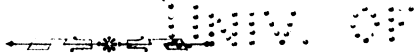
TO THE
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Love, The Supreme Good

Alas



LOVE, THE SUPREME GOOD



“If I speak with the tongues of men and
and of angels, but have not love I become
sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And
if I have the gift of prophecy, and know
all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I
have all faith, so as to remove mountains,
but have not love, I am nothing. And if
I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and
if I give my body to be burned, but have
not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love
suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth
not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed
up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seek-
eth not its own, is not provoked, taketh
not account of evil, rejoiceth not in un-

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righteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Love never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child; now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part: but then shall I know even as also I have been known. But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three: but the greatest of these is love.”—
1 Cor. chapter 13.



INTRODUCTORY

THE KEY NOTE



In the science of music there is an essential element called "The Key Note." It is the first tone of the scale in which a piece of music is written. It is the fundamental tone of the cord to which all modulations of the piece are referred. From this it is evident that, a specific Key having been chosen, it must be retained throughout the cord, or discord will inevitably follow.

In the science of human life there is also

an essential element, we might appropriately call The Key Note. It is the spirit of Love, or what in the authorized version of the Scriptures is translated Charity. This science differs from the science of music in the selection of its key note only in this—that while in music there may be chosen any one of a large variety of keys, in human life there is but one that can be adopted without discord, “God is Love.” This is his spirit. This is the key note of his being. If man is God’s child in his spiritual nature, love must be the animating spirit resident in him. In the numberless tunes that make up any isolated human life, all the various changes and modulations, if harmony is preserved, must refer to this essential key—Love.

In saying this, we refer, of course, to man in his normal condition; or, perhaps, I

should say, in his ultimate condition,—when fully redeemed from the enthrallment of the flesh. We do not say that Love is now the key note of human life. We say that it was intended of the Creator that it should be; and that in course of time it will become such. In fact the music of life is now quite discordant—a universal *pot-pourri*. The best experiences of men are very crude. They are still babes needing to be taught, as babes are, the elements of divine living. Out of their weakness has arisen a condition of sinfulness; and, so, instead of the spirit of Love dominating, the spirit of selfishness in all its various forms is the ruling spirit. But it will not always be so. By and by, when man has attained to his ideal life, Love will ascend the throne of his being, and rule without a rival.



THE CHURCH AT CORINTH



Of this abnormal condition of human life the church at Corinth, in St. Paul's day, was a striking example. It was a medley of contentions. It was divided into many opposing factions on many petty questions. It was factious with regard to the question of its ministers. Some of its members constituted a Pauline party; others were for Apollus, others were for Cephus, and others still, rising above all party strife, were for Christ. It was rent

asunder on the subject of marriage, of meats offered to idols, of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and, lastly, and chiefly, on the subject of charisms, or spiritual gifts. Those endowed with them were vain of their possession, or seemed to the others to be. Those who did not possess them were envious of the others, and spitefully attributed them to diabolical origin. Animosities run high, and there was imminent danger, not only of ecclesiastical rupture, but of the destruction of all spiritual life as well.

In this emergency a letter was sent to the apostle Paul, the founder of the church, setting forth the various occasions of contention, and committing to his arbitration the adjustment of these differences. This first epistle to the Corinthians is his reply. In it he takes up each of these questions,

and gives his inspired view respecting it. Then with the remarkable tact, that always characterized his judicial acts, he suggested a simpler and a better way—a near cut—by which they would be enabled to settle all disputes, not only the existing ones, but all that might in the future arise. In substance his words are: "You are contending about spiritual gifts. You cannot all have them if you would, for this would neutralize their charm and thwart their purpose. Besides I would not have you covet those things that engender strife, but rather the more useful gifts, such as may be enjoyed by all. But above all gifts, natural and supernatural, I would have you choose the spirit of Love, and walk in the same."

Thus does this peer of inspired men introduce this superlative theme.



THE FUNCTIONS OF LOVE



To arrive at a just appreciation of Love, and thus to perceive its supremacy, it will be necessary to notice some of its functions. In what we shall have to say with regard to these, we will not transcend the boundary of this chapter. As presented here the functions of Love may be arranged under two general heads. We will show the functions of Love; in the first place, negatively. That is, we will notice those cases that represent to us what Love cannot do. Then we will notice the cases that

represent to us what Love does do. That is, we will view Love in its negative and positive aspects or functions.

In speaking of these functions we will not follow the order in which they occur in the chapter; but will begin with the lowest function and ascend upward toward the highest.

LOVE'S FUNCTIONS CONSIDERED NEGATIVELY

Love "*thinketh no evil;*" or as rendered in the revised version, "Taketh no account of evil."

This does not mean that Love shuts its eyes to evil, and will not look at it; that is, will not give it a thought. Though proverbially blind to the faults and sins of others, in fact nothing is more open-eyed than Love. It detects the first approaches

of evil.

Nor does it mean that Love will not hold a grudge against an evil doer. This is true in fact, but this is not its meaning.

Literally rendered this passage reads, "Love is not malicious." It does not hold malice. Malice is unprovoked ill will. For its exercise there can be no motive, except the lowest possible — the motive that impells evil spirits. It is a diabolical spirit that takes pleasure in injuring others for the sake of the fiendish pleasure it affords.

Most assuredly, you will say "Love is not malicious." No doubt you are wondering why the apostle should take the pains to make the assertion. Ah! St. Paul knew that while christians claim to be under the dominance of the spirit of love, in that church at Corinth there were some

professors that evinced this spirit. Such a church quarrel as existed there could be fed only by the dominance of the diabolical.

Nor has the church of to-day, after eighteen centuries of increasing light and development, wholly out grown this basilar spirit. In many ways does it reveal itself. In some of its members it appears in the pleasure they take in tormenting children, and the animal and insect creation. In others, in the delight they take in feeding upon the reputation of their fellows. In all church quarrels the spirit of crimination and recrimination is manifest. Until the church, not to speak of the world, is entirely free from wanton cruelty, and from calumny and slander, let the record stand, that "Love thinketh no evil," in great, black letters of rebuke.

LOVE ENVIETH NOT

Again says the apostle, "Love envieth not." Envy is pain felt at the superior good others enjoy. Some there are that would lessen the force of this evil by substituting for it the word jealousy, or covetousness, or competition. How hard the devil tries to blind the world to the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Jealousy is a suspicious fear, and for its exercise there is ground that seems legitimate in the real or supposed cause of the jealousy. Covetousness is a strong desire for that which is not its own. It is intense selfishness. But it never carries with it the idea of pain felt at the prosperity of others. Competition is an attempt to outstrip others in the race for success. Failure to do so may culminate in the spirit of envy; but competition

itself is not this spirit. Envy is more virulent than either of these. It is closely allied to malignity, and when it ripens into overt act, we call it malice. It is the fruitful mother of the most unprovoked of evils. Moved with envy at Able's virtues, and his consequent favor with God, Cain reddened his hands with the blood of his brother. Envious of the superior beauty of his brother, the infatuated Caligula took his life. It was envy at the increased popularity of our Savior that impelled the leaders of the Jewish people to commit the foulest murder in the history of the world.

Certainly no one will insist that Love has any fellowship with envy. And yet, is it not true that this sin is common. It was this sin more than any other that caused the shameful discord in the early Corinthian church. It is this same spirit

that is the initiatory evil in all ecclesiastical contentions. Indeed, lamentable as it may seem, even the high and sacred office of the ministry is not entirely free from this vice. Nor will elevation expel this demon from those possessed. The ambition that excites it is insatiable. Promotion but adds fuel to the flames. Let no one deceive himself with regard to this—he cannot be actuated at the same time by the spirit of Love and the spirit of envy.

UNSEMLINESS OF LOVE

“Love does not behave itself unseemly.” This means that Love cannot be indecorous, uncourteous. It is never rude, never uncivil.

Had we not the history of this early Corinthian Church and did we not know human nature so well, these expressions of the apostle would surely astonish us. In

every divided church, as in every divided community or family, there is a great deal of wrangling, snubbing, coldness, insulting, and general unseemliness, and this, at times, by people claiming to be the loving disciples of Him, of whom it is recorded that, when he was reviled, retorted not. Such is the infatuation of depravity that it is ever blinding us to our true spiritual status, or else is over-mastering even the will of the best specimens of saintliness.

But this unseemliness often appears unprovoked in people both in and out of the church. In every community there are weak characters--strong only in their weakness. Full of self conceit, they imagine themselves the superior of others and avail themselves of every occasion to produce the impression. One man prides himself in his ungentlemanliness. He claims for himself

that he is the roughest man in the community; and no one cares to dispute his claim. His roughness consists in the infamous practice of profanity, in boisterousness of speech, in scoffing at religion and aspersing innocence of character with doubtfulness of virtue, as though dirt constituted argument, and incivility manliness. His gibes are leveled at the most sacred things, with the feeling that infinite ribaldry is consummate smartness. And with all this he claims to be the truest disciple of love because he possesses some heart for distressed humanity; and because for mercenary considerations, or the vow of the guild to which he is attached, he performs acts that are the semblance of humanity. He would hardly be human if he did not possess one redeeming quality. Indeed, if

there is anything in the Darwinian theory of evolution of our species, he is without a doubt the much searched-for connecting link.

Within the church I have known a type of being closely akin to this. It differs from it chiefly in that, instead of making a butt of God and religion, it attempts to make it of his fellow-men, but really makes it of himself. The incivility of this class is proverbial. Anyone of it will meet you with a snarl, and greet you with a brusqueness that savors of the insulting. In his simplest demands he is imperative. His mildest conversations reveal the tyrannical. In parting he fires at his companion his adieu pointed at both ends, and pompously passes away inflated with the feeling of his own superiority. That he has made an impression upon you is without a doubt;

but alas for the conceited boor, it is not the impression he aimed at—of his personal importance—but of supreme contempt for his uncourteous egotism. Love never manifests the spirit of unseemliness. This spirit emanates from another quarter.

THE UNSELFISHNESS OF LOVE.

“Love seeketh not her own.” That is, Love is unselfish. Selfishness is the all-comprehensive sin: as Love is the all-comprehensive virtue. It is the root from which all other sins spring. It is a keynote of human life; but the key pitched on the lowest plane. In ways too numerous to mention, much less to illustrate, it manifests itself. It is a spirit, a life, revealing itself in every thought and act. Of it the apostle says it is not consonant with Love. Perfect love is absolutely unselfish.

When Paul wrote these words there was

in his mind, doubtlessly, an example of selfishness common in the church to which he addressed this epistle. As it is a striking example, we will use it to illustrate our point. Within that church there were some Christians accustomed to eat meat that had been offered in sacrifice to idols. This practice gave offense to those members who possessed narrower minds and weaker consciences. These insisted that their practice was equivalent to the worship of the idols, and ought to be discontinued. To these the more liberal class replied, "Why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience?"

This question—of meats offered to idols—among others, was sent to the apostle for judgement. In his reply he does not deny the validity of the position taken by the broad party. He admits, indeed, that,

in itself considered, it is perfectly lawful to use such meats. But he insists that, while this is true, the claim of liberty, under the circumstances, is based in selfishness, and that Love is a higher principle than liberty. He reasons that this exercise of liberty is liable to make some of the weaker ones fall into the same practice in opposition to their scruples, and so to place their consciences under condemnation. Liberty ought not to be an occasion of sin. He then draws the conclusion that Love, for the sake of the consciences of others, and to avoid evil, will forego even liberty.

If selfishness could ever claim justification, it certainly could claim it in a case like this. We are created liberty-loving beings. The instinct is born in us. Beside, the highest and last call of the Gospel

is the call to liberty. It is the principle inherent in the Deity. "Now the Lord is that spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." This is the innermost principle of the ideal human life. Paul calls it, "The Glorious Liberty of the Children of God," James, speaking of this principle, calls it "The perfect law of liberty." Again, Paul exhorts us to establish ourselves in it, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage."

God is calling us to utter enfranchisement of thought, and spirit, and life. All bondage is to be broken, all fetters to be removed. Just in proportion as we realize liberty are we in harmony with God, and is our joy pure and complete.

We do not like therefore, to be inter-

tered with in the exercise of our liberty. For it we will sacrifice all earthly possessions, even life itself.

For the lower forms of selfishness we may not readily find an apologist, but for this form, many even professedly christian, will contend. But Love is higher than liberty. In its last analysis Love is liberty. It knows no bounds; brooks no restraints. But while the race is in the process of unfolding itself--advancing from the crude towards the ideal—liberty is in danger of running to excess, and of becoming a stumbling--block to others. Love says "Restrain!" "Sacrifice!" Though you have been called unto liberty, use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh; but by love serve one another. Liberty is our privilege; but carried to excess it oversteps our privilege, and is then the abuse of liber-

ty. Liberty is our privilege; but we must remember that others have liberty as well as we, and a liberty that does not respect their rights, is equally an abuse, and therefore, outlawed. Liberty is our privilege, but "Love seeketh not her own," when her own becomes selfishness. It then forfeits the right to claim Love as its parentage.

Again, selfishness always thwarts its own purpose, but Love always succeeds. The motive of all selfishness is happiness; but since the world began happiness was never found by searching for it: it is a coquettish thing, ever luring us onward; yet ever eluding our grasp: it is not a prize to be won, but a spiritual state within us, and Love is that spirit.

THE MODESTY OF LOVE.

"Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."

“Vaunteth not itself.” That is, is no braggart. In quietness it performs its work, preferring to be seen in its achievements, rather than to be heard in boasting words. Long ago the Master said, “Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.” Yet how many there are, and of these some who claim to be disciples of the meek and lowly One—

that are never satisfied without proclaiming their good deeds and goodness from the housetops.

The spirit of vaunting is as common in its reference to the relation of christian experience as to alms giving and good works. Indeed about all the stock some professors of religion possess is their boasting profession. We look at their lives in vain to find commendable virtues. Testimony is a good thing. God calls us to be witnesses for him by the word of testimony. The christian ought to tell what great things the Lord has done for him. But we have a right to look back of the testimony for a life and character to support it. Christians will be judged not by the good things they say of themselves, but by the good life they live. Without this all testimony is but sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

The word of testimony is praiseworthy; but it carries force with it in proportion to the modesty of the spirit that gives it utterance. The vaunting spirit is always distasteful; and always more so in religion than elsewhere. It smacks of self-righteousness even though the one relating his experience knows whereof he speaks, and attributes unto God the glory. It is the empty wagon that rattles loudest, and it is the empty heart that is offensively pronounced and demonstrative in relating his testimony. It is the modest christian that wields the deepest and most lasting influence for good. It is the characteristic of love to hide away even from itself.

Testimony is good, but if you would have it carry the most weight let it be given in modest terms like those of John Newton when he said, "I am not what I ought to be,

I am not what I wish to be, I am not what I hope to be; but, by the grace of God, I am not what I was." There is often more force, by far, in one of these negative utterances, than in all the boasting speeches that can be made.

THE HUMILITY OF LOVE.

"Love is not puffed up." The force of this expression in the active voice is, "does not breathe hard." That is, Love is not inflated; not filled with the spirit of self-importance. Love breathes easy, breathes deep. Love is liberty; it acts with the ease of unconsciousness.

Says Solomon, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." How forcibly illustrative of this principle are the words of the Savior to his disciples. He tells them that, having been invited with others to a feast, they are not

to choose the divans of honor, as the inflated Pharisees did, for should a person of greater honor afterward appear, they would be bidden to relinquish their seats, and be required to take a more humble place; and so with shame fall in the estimation of all present. But rather should they choose the seats beneath their station, so that at the coming in of the master of ceremonies, they would be invited to seats of greater honor, that they might appear to best advantage in the eyes of their fellows.

Vain pride is a common vice, especially among the young. We love to be complimented; we are inflated with flattery; and yet nothing is more hateful to a modest man than these same flattering words, and nothing more disgusting to observers than the pride they usually excite. Love enriches, pride impoverishes. The moun-

tain peaks rear their heads proudly above the lowly valleys, but the rain drops that fall upon them leave little or no returns, but run off into the valleys to make fruitful fields there.

Though the descent into the vale of humiliation may be severe to fleshly ambitions, learn that only here are found the greatest charms, and that from this vale ascends the highest joy. It is not the rain that, descending from lofty heights, alights upon the crown of the tree; that sings its song of a transfigured glory; but those drops that, falling at the roots of the tree, ascend beneath its bark, and reappear in living fiber, and in beautiful foliage. Love can afford to dispense with all worldly display, and hide its face even from itself, for great is its reward in heaven, while on earth its fruitage will appear in time openly.



LOVE'S FUNCTIONS CONSIDERED POSITIVELY.



Hitherto we have noticed Love in its negative aspect—that is, we have seen what Love will *not* do. Pass we now to notice its functions from the positive point of view—that is, to look at it in its wonderful possibilities of benevolence.

If the charm of this spirit has been made manifest when contrasted with spirits ignoble, its loveliness will shine forth with greater lustre when viewed in its enduring

and doing functions. Under this division of our subject we wish to notice, first, that—

LOVE ENDURES PROVOCATIONS.

“Love is not easily provoked.” A passive nature can never be very useful. To accomplish great results one must possess great spirit. But like every other force, temper must be brought and kept under control. If you were looking for a steed to do for you the best service, you would not look for a drone, because easily managed. You would look for a horse full of metal; and yet you could get the best out of him only when thoroughly under control. Temper is a valuable endowment and the more, the better; but temper well in hand. Anger, resentment, is nowhere condemned in the Word; but only a hasty and uncontrollable anger. We are to

be slow to anger. We are to return good for evil, indeed; but never are we to cast our pearls before swine. God, the great archetype, is represented as possessing anger; He is represented as angry with the sinner every day; and, again, He is represented as a consuming fire. But so completely has He his temper under control, that he endures the provocations of sinful and erring men with all long-suffering and patience.

Love is too deep to be easily excited. Only the surface of the ocean becomes flecked with waves under the influence of ordinary winds. The great deep is hardly reached even by the most terrific tempests. Shallow natures are easily moved, but the spirit of Love endures the greatest provocations without resentment.

“Love is not easily provoked,” and yet,

how many claiming to be Love's disciples are quick tempered! How many are resentful of wrongs! How few consider the palliating circumstances in the case of the offender, the life, the disposition, the training, or rather, lack of training, and the surroundings. Love sees all these at a glance, and makes due allowance for them.

LOVE IS PATIENT AND KIND.

“Love suffers long, and is kind.”

Perhaps these functions of Love ought to be taken separately; but when thus linked together they display the infinite possibilities of Love's benevolence.

Long-suffering, though a neglective virtue, is essentially divine. Human patience is weak-spined. It carries but small burdens, and these not far. But upon the shoulders of Love may be piled the world's afflictions, mistakes, weaknesses, and sins.

Love's brightest example of long-suffering is seen in bearing wrongs. Knowing the weakness of humanity, and its proneness to sin, it ever stands ready to forgive where true contrition is apparent; not once, nor twice a day only; but seventy times seven.

It is a difficult feat to endure long, it is far more difficult to return evil with kindness. It requires the largest measure of grace to pay for insults received, and for the blunders of others, in coin of benevolence. By a great effort one may work himself up to the point of endurance for a time; but when he is asked to endure again and again: and especially when he is asked to accept oft-repeated provocations as though they were favors bestowed:—when he is expected to smile upon the offender and speak kindly to him, and do kind offices for him—the utmost limit of endur-

ance of even renewed human nature has been reached. And yet such is the function of Love. Thus God deals with us, and thus we are commanded to deal with one another. The Great Master has said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." And for all this he assigns the reason, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

The world regards these functions of Love as marks of weakness. Unless one vindicates his honor we are apt to think him a coward. But in the eye of Love it is the strong only that can long-endure, and exercise kindness while enduring.

Love's honor is always vindicated in the good it imparts to others. Vindicativeness is devilishness. The retaliatory spirit is of the wicked one. Love only is of God. The salvation of the offender is worth infinitely more than the vindication of offended honor. Vindicativeness wounds and repels, Love draws and heals. "Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good."

THE FORBEARANCE OF LOVE.

"Love beareth all things." These words are susceptible of various translations. They may be rendered, "Love hideth," or "covereth up," all things." This is true of Love. St. Peter says, "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." Over the imperfections and sins of others it casts its mantle. Not because it winks at its malignity, and esteems it a trivial

thing. Nothing sees so clearly the exceeding sinfulness of sin. But because, beyond the sin it sees the sinner, and realizes his supreme importance. Beside, it knows his frame, and remembers that he is dust, and so knows how to make allowance for him.

Or the sentence may be translated "Love contains all things." It is the all-inclusive law, the high consummation and fulfillment of all law. It is the grand focus where all the infinite lines of law converge. It is not only the *highest* law, but, as time advances, it will become more and more apparent that it is the *only* law. God is the sum-total of law. All law is the expression of his being. But "God is Love." However complex and heterogeneous law in its thousand aspects may appear, its final translation, as well as ultimate appeal, is Love.

From this view of Love we behold it as infinite intelligence, absolute perfection, and the very essence of benevolence. "All things work together for good to those who love God;" and all things emanate for good from hearts inspired by love. Even chastisements are corrective, and penalties work out good results.

In this connection, however, we think the apostle meant to convey the thought of forbearance: for the words may be translated, "Love forbears all things." That is, Love holds itself under perfect control even when patience, under provocations, has ceased to be a virtue, and punishment has become the proper thing. There come times often in experience with offenders, when patience ceases to exert a wholesome influence; and when nothing but chastisement will heal them. The questions that

arise at such times are, "What now shall be done? How far shall punishment be inflicted?" Most persons who have been provoked, and their passion having been long pent-up, will take matters into their own hands to execute vengeance. Forgetting mercy while the furore of anger is within them, they will crush the culprit. But in the most aggravating cases Love says, "Forbear! Forbear!" God only knows how to handle men in extreme cases. He only is able to exercise mercy under great provocation; and so it is written Vengeance belongeth unto God, that He only dare repay.

What, do you ask, shall I not punish the offender at such a time? Yes, certainly, punish, but smite in love, not in anger. Punish to heal, not to destroy.

No virtue is more requisite than this. It is needed in every relation of man with his brother man. It is needed in the family circle in the dealings of parents with ungovernable children: and in the relation of husbands with wives, and of wives with husbands. It is needed in courts of justice in the punishment of the incorrigible. It is needed in churches often in the administration of discipline. All natures, in which the sense of justice dominates,—the unforgiving natures—need to cultivate this grace; for it is one of the divinest and most luminous.

LOVE'S BENEVOLENCE.

“Love rejoices not in iniquity: but rejoiceth in the truth.” Literally rendered this passage reads, “Love rejoices not in the misfortunes of others: but rejoices in the victory of truth.” A paradox, do you say?

Does anyone think it impossible to rejoice in the triumph of the right: and yet exercise sympathy for, and show pity toward, the wrong doer? With man it is impossible; but with God, with Love, all things are possible. Love is full of paradoxes.

The most common offense against the majesty of the law is the traffic in intoxicating liquors. Now it is perfectly consonant with the spirit of Love to rejoice when such offenses have been detected and brought to justice. But in the triumph of the right the offender always suffers, in estate, in mind, and sometimes in body. All this Love approves, and ought to approve, for the social well-being. But in the discomforture of the offender Love dares not, and does not, rejoice. Indeed, in the punishment of the wicked Love suffers more than he. If it would consult its taste every of-

fender would go free. But because the best good of society demands victims for its purification, and because the offender needs chastisement for his own correction; therefore Love makes the sacrifice in the interest of justice.

LOVE'S FAITH.

“Love believeth all things.” It is a fundamental principle of law, that the court is always on the side of the accused until guilt is proven. Justice demands that judge and jury be unprejudiced; and that their faith in the innocence of the accused remains unshaken until the contrary is established. Proverbially Love is blind: its eyes are closed to every misdemeanor until opened by indubitable evidence. It gives the accused the benefit of every doubt.

LOVE'S HOPE.

“Love hopeth all things.” It never despairs. Even when guilt has been proven, and the sentence passed, Love does not discard the culprit as hopelessly lost. All others may give him up, but Love clings to him and hopes to the end.

Love though proverbially blind to the faults of others, sees deeper than any of the graces into human hearts. It sees the utter hideousness of guilt; but beyond the guilt it sees the palliating circumstances, not only, but as well, the image of God in the culprit—distorted, it may be,—but there discovered. It sees this—the inestimable value of the soul—and in it the germs of recuperative possibilities; and hopes to foster these into active being.

LOVE'S STABILITY.

“Love never faileth.” The apostle having exhausted his vocabulary, is forced to a generic expression in his attempt to represent the final possibility of Love. Love is always on duty; it is never exhausted; it keeps no record of time; it meets the wants of every case; it is unquenchable; it is stronger than death; it is everlasting; it is the bond of perfectness.





LOVE SUPERIOR TO GIFTS.



Hitherto we have seen the matchless value of love in its functions. Pass we now to notice its superiority to the charisms or spiritual gifts.

These gifts the apostle touches, one by one, as one would touch the single keys of an organ, and shows how little music there is in them when taken alone. He then couples each with Love, and reveals the richness of harmony and value each

possesses when thus associated. After this simple exercise he runs his fingers along the key-board of ideal human life, and plays a full oratorio of rythm and harmony that infinitely outrivals the best productions of anusical genius.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” Originally this refered to the supernatural gift of tongues; but without violence to its meaning it may be so interpreted as to embrace all eloquence,—the pen, the press, the bar, the senate, the rostrum, the pulpit. Eloquence is a power. Demosthenes could move a nation with his tongue. But eloquence without love is a power to arouse the worst passions, and to array man in deadly conflict with his fellow-man.

“Though I have the gift of prophecy, and have not Love, I am nothing.” Prophecy here means, not alone the ability to foretell events; but as well, to teach, to instruct.

This gift is also a mighty potency to mould and fashion the lives and characters of others. But without love, it is the power by which infidelity and viciousness have been disseminated throughout the world.

“Though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not Love, I am nothing.” Knowledge, and the power of mental penetration, are gifts to be coveted. They enlarge ones being, and place him at a great advantage before the world. And yet, when not sanctified with Love, they foster selfishness, arrogance and vanity.

“Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not Love, I am nothing.” We do not think this refers

to miraculous faith; but rather to great engineering skill, such as tunnels mountains, lays ocean cables, constructs great bridges, builds railroads. Such faith is next to invincible. But such faith without Love is a destructive, rather than a constructive, force—a moral earthquake or pestilence.

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, it profiteth me nothing.” Surely in alms-giving there is the semblance of Love. The poor need the surplus of the thrifty; and a blessing is pronounced upon those that remember them with their gifts. And yet alms-giving may be but the price paid with which to purchase a quiet conscience, or to keep ones standing in the circle in which he moves. Often, indeed they are given as a stroke of enterprise—to curry favor for the sake of patronage. We can perceive how that with a low mo-

tive one may give all that he has. Only Love sanctifies our giving: then whether it be much or little that is given, it will be a blessing to the giver as well as to the recipient. Giving from motive receives its reward in the reception of the object sought. Love only is void of motive.

“And though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.”

The spirit of self-sacrifice is the very essence of Christianity. It is the spirit of Him, who though he was rich, esteeming it no misdemeanor to claim equality with God; yet humbled himself, and assumed human nature, and having been found in the fashion of man, died the death of the cross to save us. Nothing so effectually wins hearts for Christ as the spirit of self-surrender. Nothing so enriches and de-

velops the inner life and character as the exercise of this spirit. And yet examples have been recorded of persons who have given up their lives for mere cold applause. Excited to infatuation by the huzzahs of the people, they have sprung into the breach and perished. Such giving is not self-sacrifice; it is but the counterfeit. It is worse than empty show. It is suicide.

These gifts—eloquence, prophecy, wisdom, knowledge, faith; and these deeds of charity and self-devotion—are the best we can either receive or cultivate. Yet, considered abstractly, apart from Love, they are nothing: and if aggressive, they are worse than nothing.

At most these charisms are but the implements that Love uses for the accomplishment of her work. But the spirit that plies these tools is of infinitely more value than the

implements used: and this spirit is Love. These tools, like all others, are subject to supercession. As long as they are useful they abide and are sacred: but when their utility is gone, they are discarded for others more practical. Indeed the Charisms have been laid aside, as childish things outgrown. They were necessary in the elementary days of Christianity, in laying the foundation of the church; but having accomplished, their work they have been superceded. "Whether there be prophecies they shall fail: whether there be tongues, they shall cease: whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophecy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as

a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." These special spiritual gifts were but the swadling garments of the baby church. Long ago they were outgrown; but "Love never fails." This, the working spirit, lives on, lives ever.

LOVE SUPERIOR TO THE ABIDING GRACES.

"But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three: but the greatest of these is Love."

Unlike the charisms, faith and hope abide. Indeed, they are as enduring as Love. Not on the ground of continuity then is Love superior to these. We sometimes sing:

"The atonement of thy blood apply,
Till faith to sight improve:
Till hope in full fruition die.
And all my soul be love."

But this is mere sentiment. It supposes that spiritual things will eventually be made manifest to the natural eyes, and that there will be a limit to progress. But neither of these is true.

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and spiritual life is infinite in its possible unfolding. Faith gives place to realization only to enter upon unexplored regions. Hope dies in fruition only to live again in greater blessedness anticipated. While God exists as the ideal of man's ambition, faith and hope will survive.

It is in its functions and its essential nature, that Love is superior to these. Faith is the eye of the spirit by which it beholds the Invincible One. Hope is the aspiration of the spirit after God. But Love is the Deity. "God is Love." Now "he that dwells in Love dwells in God, and

God in him." The charisms are the temporary tools by which love achieves her work: faith and hope are the abiding arms and hands that ply the tools: but Love is the ruling spirit that animates the whole body.

"Love, the Divinest of the train, The Sovereign of the rest."

Love only is divine. Faith and Hope are essentially human. Neither belongs to the Infinite. They are agencies of spiritual growth: but the Illimitable cannot grow. They belong to the finite. To partake of the spirit of Love is to be partaker of the infinite, the Divine.

CLOSING WORDS.

"Yet show I unto you a more excellent way. Walk in Love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God." The

Christ life is the ideal, because the life of God, the life of Love, the life of self-sacrifice. As Christ walked, so ought we to walk. The life emptied of self and filled with God is the only true and successful life for man. It is life-eternal antedated. It is heaven begun on earth, in our mortal bodies, to be consummated after death. To accomplish this in us was the mission of the Son of God to this world. Love is life, spiritual life, the highest life in God's universe, the consummation of the human-divine perfection.

Do we hear anyone say that such a life is beautiful to think of; but not realizable as an experience, at least, not in this world? Out of a heart crude and undeveloped springs such an objection. Because our race is yet in its childhood, in spiritual things, it imagines manhood's experience

but a poetic vision. Just in the degree we evolve into spiritual being; in that degree will our hope grasp the possibility of such a life. Life added is the pledge of more-abundant life to come.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” These words, though true of the life beyond the grave in its relation to this life,—refer primarily to the present. To see anything spiritually is to know it; and to see it and know it is to realize it as a personal experience. We see it within us, and know it as ours. To see God, face to face; and to know Him as we are known by Him, is the beatitude of the pure in heart; and who doubts the possibility of attaining to heart purity in this world?

But it will be true of the life beyond in

a more perfect sense than it can be here; because there we will be free from the entrammeling fleshliness, and because the higher the state of being, the greater the volume of life acquired.

“Walk in Love.” More and more is this spirit permeating the world. More and more—continuously is our race arising out of the animal, the elementary, and advancing toward the spiritual, the perfect. For six thousand years we have been evolving the higher life—very slowly at first, while the fleshly predominated; but with ever accelerated momentum. God has been tuning up this old, discordant instrument, we call The Human Race, bringing it up toward absolute harmony. Element by element of individual character, and of the domestic and social life, He has been bringing into accord with the fundamental note,

Love. By and by, the whole race, in its every department, will be brought into absolute harmony, when the music of its life, in perfection of rythm and fullness of volume, will resound throughout the chambers of the universe.

So replete with music was the soul of Mozart, that when as yet he was but a child, his fingers seemed inspired whenever they touched a musical instrument. The story is told of him, that, at this tender age, his father took him to the imposing Cathedral in his native Salzburg. After the service was ended, and the congregation dispersed, he conducted his son to the organ loft, and, having instructed him in the use of the stops and pedals, placed him upon the organ seat, and bade him play, while he pumped the bellows. Despite the inability of the chubby fingers

to span an octave, at every stroke upon the key-board they seemed to snatch exquisite beauquets of melody from the instrument, and fling them into the atmosphere. Upon that instrument such music had never before been performed. Presently the Benedictine Monks from the adjacent abbey, hearing the sound, stealthily entered the Cathedral, and crept along the nave to the foot of the organ stairs. For a time they listened to the endless flow of melody, so full of passionate expression and dramatic force, overcome with superstitious awe. Presently, the more courageous of them, with bated breath, and hands pressing on their palpitating hearts, began to ascend. Having reached the summit, and gazing upon the youthful genius, pouring his soul into the music, the atmosphere seemed an effluvia from the heavenly world, and they

stood enchanted and transfixed to their place.

When that day shall come, so long looked and prayed, for, when God's fingers shall run across the key-board of our race, fully redeemed from crudeness and sinfulness, I think there will be wafted out, through the corridors of the universe, the music of Love so enravishing in its boundless melody, that the angels of God, accustomed to the music of heaven, will listen, spell-bound by its harmonious measures.

THE END.

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