

New Creation Teaching Ministry G. C. Bingham

THE NATURE AND THE MEANING OF LOVE

1. Introduction: God Is Love

(i) The Statement, 'God is Love'

Only twice in Scripture is the definitive statement made, 'God is love.' Both statements are found in John's first letter in 4:8 and 4:16. In I John 4:7-21 John works out of practical thesis. He says, in effect, 'Let us love one another. Such love we need in order to love comes (only) from God. To see God as love requires the act and experience of new birth. Having that we see God as love, and so we love. We see His acts in Christ of (a) Sending His Son into the world to bring us life, and (b) In the act which brings us that life, namely the propitiation for sins. Thus we know God is love. He has acted in love.' This for John naturally leads on to our love for others. So he proceeds, 'We respond to His love by loving others, and in us is God's love seen. In fact God is thus seen. The God of love Himself abides in us, and we know this because His Spirit gives this abiding and knowledge to us. Understanding what the Son has done we believe in him, and confess him, and so we live in God and God in us. All this brings assurance to us that God is love. Thus, living in God, and having God live in us we know the love that has saved us, and in particular we know that such love has settled the matter of our sin and its penalty and we have no fear for the day of judgement. In fact we have confidence for that day, knowing that as guiltless as is he (the Son) in regard to the judgement, so are we. Also we are guiltless, now in this world!'

John proceeds further to show that since God has revealed Himself as love, we, His creatures and children are now equipped and obligated to love others. To say we love Him whilst we do not love others is a contradictory statement. Knowing God is love we not only love Him but all men. Thus we are back at the commencement of his thesis to the call, 'We who are loved of God, let us love others, for such love flows to us from God, and so we can (and must) love all people.'

(ii) God is Love

To Christians it is an axiom, 'God is love'. To those who do not believe, even persons who read Scripture, this is not necessarily apparent. Indeed it may be the truest thing of all to say that no human being, unaided, can possibly believe that God is love. John makes it clear that such knowledge is by revelation. In fact he posits that no man can know God as He is except through the happening of new birth or being born again. This new birth is demanded by Jesus, 'Except a man be born again (anew) he cannot see the Kingdom of God,' and certainly without this action of the Holy Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God, i.e. see and know God and come under His reign (cf. John 3:3-14, 1:11-13, II Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15, Titus 3:3-5).

It is not difficult to hear the statement, 'God is love' and have nodding agreement. It is another matter altogether to be assured of the truth of the statement. It is to come to that place of understanding God's Person as love that we pursue these studies.

2. God Always Love

In I John 2:7, John says, 'Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment, which you had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.' In 3:11 of the same letter he continues, 'For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning that we should love one another.' The demand is that men should love others. John then links failure to love with Cain's murder of Abel. He infers strongly that Cain ought to have loved Abel, and indeed that love of man for man is the principle which is as old as humanity. Doubtless 'from the beginning' could mean (a) From God's command to Israel of Leviticus 19:18, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself,' or (b) From Christ's command, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another,' in John 13:34 and 15:12. It is clear, however, that John saw the same demand placed upon Cain who denied it in his saying, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'

If our understanding is correct then love is a demand upon man from creation. At the same time, the principle of Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18, conflated, must mean that one only loves man when one loves God. The principle we will see is that man only loves God when he knows God loves him. It is axiomatic that man ought to love God simply because He has created him. That, however, is a point to which we will come.

We have another angle from which we can come to our thesis that man ought to love man. It is this: If we take the law of creation to be that of true morality, or true function, then it should be that of love. Indeed it will be that. If we take the leap that the law of Israel was the law of love, and that the same law approximated to the creational law, then we arrive at the conclusion that the law of love has always been extant, however much it may or may not have been obeyed. In N.T. passages such as Romans 13:8-10, Galatians 5:13, and James 1:25 and 2:8-13, as well as Jesus' statement that love to God, self and neighbour are the essence of the law and prophets all go to show that the moral law and the law of love are essentially one, rightly understood. This then seems to underline John's statement that the law of love was from the beginning. This being so we should see the law of love as inherent in creation, thus concluding that the creation is essentially a love creation, and of course created by Love, in and for love.

This of course is a strong assertion, seeing little or nothing is said about creation being a matter of love or springing from love. It is difficult, nevertheless, to deny that it must have been so. The statement in Genesis 1:31 of creation that 'it was very good' must imply complete functionality of the creation, this involving harmony, and constituting interdependence and interaction of all things. This surely is love in the true practices of creation. Man's rational part in creation was surely to approach God, creation, his neighbour and himself in the spirit and forms of love.

3. The Creative Trinity Is Love

(i) The Social Trinity

If we base our hermeneutic of the Bible on the principle that the Scriptures are an integrated whole, so that what comes later in history helps us to understand what was prior to it in the light of its development, then it is valid to see the nature of God as always being what it is most lately revealed to be. We mean that the Son as the Son of God before time is most explicitly revealed in the N.T. Scriptures, but not in this explicit way in the Old Testament. Likewise the revelation of the Spirit of God, whilst present in the O.T., is not as explicit in the Old as the New Testament. This is not to say both these Persons of the Godhead are not present or active throughout all time as well as in eternity. They are. But then there is a time in history when their revelation is given in this explicit manner. Their explication being as full as is necessary for us to understand the nature of God, we are now permitted to view the triune Godhead after the manner of its revelation. We are permitted, in fact pledged, to speak of the Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

One theological treatment of the Trinity speaks of the ‘social Trinity’ pointing to the relationships within the Godhead. That is that the Father loves the Son, the Son the Father, and that the Spirit is the Spirit of love (Rom. 5:5, 15:30). The Spirit has even been called ‘the Go-Between God’, meaning that (a) He is the one by whom Father and Son relate in depth, and (b) the one by whom man is related to God. Whilst no mediation is needed to relate Father and Son - that relationship of Father-Son being dynamic in itself - yet the Spirit is always spoken of as the Spirit of the Father or the Spirit of the Son, and in the mystery of relationships he is at once one with the Father and the Son.

What is clear is that God is love, and that love transcends the mathematical ‘Three ones are three’ so that ‘three ones are one.’ We mean the unity of love is the essential nature of the Triune Godhead, and therefore the Persons are one in love. Indeed they are love, hence the mathematical presents no dilemma or contradiction. The Father loves the Son and the Spirit, the Son the Father and the Spirit, the Spirit the Father and the Son, and those loves are simultaneous, and at once constitute total unity which is ever immutable. Whatever the elements may be of functional subordination and superordination, nothing alters the mutuality of the Persons. This is love-unity, and its nature is the essential nature of God.

(ii) The Love of the Persons

‘God is one’ is the message of the Judaic Scriptures. It is not, merely, that God is the one true God as over and against the many lords and gods of the idolaters, but that God is intrinsically One. He is at unity with Himself, and from that unity comes the creation, which must reflect that essential unity. God has only one Name, ‘Yahweh’, meaning the I AM or I AM THAT I AM with its interpreted permutations of meaning. The term ‘God’ is a generic term, in fact a designation rather than nounal, YAHWEH, even when compounded with an adjective, remains unalterable. The adjective simply reveals an aspect of the nature of YAHWEH.

Whilst it is not our intention here to give a rationale of the Trinity¹, we

¹ See *The Meaning & Significance of the Trinity* (NCPI) for a fuller treatment.

need to recognise the N.T. emphasis on the presence in the O.T. on God as Father, of Christ as present (esp. I Cor. 10:4, Isaiah 6:1ff, cf. John 12:40-41, Heb. 3: 1-7, etc.), and the Holy Spirit as operative. In the N.T. there is no question about the deity of the Persons, and we are permitted to read this back into the O.T. This being so we may now discuss the Persons as Love, and as loving.

(a) The Father is Love

God, of course, is known in the O.T. as Father. Primarily He is revealed as Covenant-Father, or Father of Israel. It is true that Luke 3:38 and Acts 17:28-30 show God as Creator-Father, Adam being His son, and men being His offspring. Adam's abdication from his true relationship with God places him as an errant son, and his progeny as participating in his abdication. Hence the theological statement, 'God is the Father of all men, but not all men are the children of God.' Israel, however, is collectively God's son. (See Exodus 4:22, Hosea 11:1, Deuteronomy 32:6, etc.) In a singular sense each true Israelite is a child of God (Deut. 14:1). However there is not mutuality amongst peers, such as is indicated in Zechariah 13:7, i.e. 'my fellow', or the hints of such in Psalms 2, 145 and 110, Psalms which for the most part in the N.T. point to the affinity of Messiah-Son with the Father-God. There are other such passages such as Isaiah 9:6-7, 11:1f, Daniel and these also indicate strongly of the relationship of Messiah or Son of Man with God.

Nevertheless it is in the N.T. that the relationship of the Father with the Son is revealed. In John 5:17 Jesus indicates that he has always worked with the Father. In John 1:14 he is the epitome of the Father, and this relationship is seen in many other passages. He alone knows God as Father (Matt. 11:27, John 14: 6, cf. 3:35), and so the mutuality of true (ontological) love is present. His relationship is shown in his expression of the Father such as is seen in Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3, and so on. His incarnation makes overt that fact, but then the expression is in human terms. This is why it is not always easy to know whether Jesus is speaking of his Father's love for him in his pre-incarnation being or in his incarnational being as Son. It does not greatly matter, for the relationship with the Son incarnated is what we see of the love of the Father. Here, then, are some of the statements concerning the Father's love for the Son: Colossians 1:13, 'the Son of His love'; John 3:35, 'The Father loves the Son'; 10:17, 'Therefore does my Father love me'; 15:9, 'As the Father has loved me'; 17:23, 'Thou...hast loved them even as Thou hast loved me'; 17:24, '...Thy love for me before the foundation of the world.' The special statement of John 5:20, 'The Father loves the Son and shows him all that He Himself is doing,' relates to the work of the Father and the Son.

The statement 'God is love' refers of course to God's dealings with man. It is clear from Matthew 5:43-48 that God as Creator-Father loves His entire creation, albeit many within it rebel. He loves the just and the unjust, the good and the evil, and gives the evidences of His love to them though they may never read them aright! His love then is shown in creation, and continues to be shown in His providence. His judgements are not a sign of emotional anger at evil, but His wrath upon evil because it mars His creation. Primarily His love is shown in election, and this is clearly manifested in His choice of Israel. Likewise in the N.T. His love is an electing love, but then it is love. His love is shown in redemption: this is axiomatic. The following Scriptures (a few amongst many) show the love of God (the Father) for man:- John 3:16, 'God so loved the world'; 16:27, 'The Father loveth you'; 17:23, '...that Thou hast loved them'; Romans 8: 39, '...the love of God'; Ephesians 2:4, 'God...out of the great love with which He loved us'; II Thessalonians 2:16, '...God our Father, who has loved us'; I John 4:10, '...He loved us, and sent His Son...'; 4:11, 'If God so loved us'; 4:19, 'He first loved us.' These are explicit statements, but the whole thrust of the N.T. is epitomised in the statement 'God is love.' He is love in the O.T. also, but that love is expressed primarily to Israel as His covenant people, but

that does not mean He does not love the nations. The Abrahamic Covenant is created to be the source of blessing for all nations. We conclude that the thrust of all Scripture is that God is love, even conceding the fact that He is often, only, seen as wrath.

(b) The Son is Love

If love is shown in creation then the Son, also, is present in this act (John 1:1-3, Hebrews 1:2, I Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1:15-17). In fact the Father's love does not operate apart from that of the Son. We have seen above how the Father loves the Son and how the Two work together. That the Son loves the Father is shown from the following:- John 14:31, '...that the world may know that I love the Father...' (John 10:17, 18:11, cf. 5:17-19, Heb. 5:7-8, 10:5, 9, 12:2, Phil. 2:8). In this regard few explicit references are made because the Father's love for the Son assumes the Son's love for the Father.

When it comes to the love of the Son (Jesus Messiah) for man, then the references are many:- Mark 10:21, 'Jesus beholding him loved him'; John 13:1, 'Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end'; 13:34, 'As I have loved you'; 14:21, 'I will love him'; 15:9, 'So have I loved you'; 15:12, '...as I have loved you'; Galatians 2:20, '...who loved me'; Ephesians 5:2, '...as Christ loved'; Revelation 1:5, '...him who loved us and washed us from our sins'; 3:9, 'that I have loved them'. Again we recognise Christ's love for us in the acts of his ministry and salvific work. The N.T. makes the demand of the total response of love to the Son, as also to the Father.

In the face of this vast material we must recognise that the Son not only loves but in and with the Father is also, himself, love. Hence the statements 'the love of God which is in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:39) and 'the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge' (Ephes. 3:19) which is manifestly the love of the Father.

(c) The Spirit is Love

When it comes to the love of the Spirit - a phrase only mentioned once in Scripture (cf. Romans 15:30) - we need to understand the person and ministry of the Spirit to see that they are of love. The Spirit is also present in the work of creation (Gen. 1:1-2) and providence as also continuing creation (Psalm 104:29-30, Job 33:4, Ezekiel 37:9, Romans 8:1-3, etc.), as also in redemption. The Son in his incarnation fulfils Sonship by the Spirit. Not only is the Spirit in the age-long work of God, but he is in the prophecy which shapes up to redemption in the Son, and in the Son all things are done through the Spirit. Hence when Romans 5:5 says 'The love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit', it means what Romans 8:1-3 is affirming (cf. Titus 3:3-5, I Cor. 6:9-11) that the work of redemption is applied by the Spirit. Thus the Spirit is grieved when the work of the Cross is denied (cf. Ephes. 4:26-31).

The relationship between the Spirit and the Father, and the Spirit and the Son is seen in the fact that the Spirit is always 'the Spirit of' either, or each, of the Persons. Thus he is the 'Spirit of God', 'the Spirit of the Lord,' 'the Spirit of the Son,' 'the Spirit of Christ,' and 'the Spirit of Jesus', meaning that he always relates to the Person with and for whom he is working. In fact rightly understood he is simultaneously the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit the Son, and this is what Bishop John Taylor means when he calls him 'the Go-Between God'.

So then the Spirit is ever about the business of the Godhead in creation, history, and redemption. Thus he loves the Father, he loves the Son, and he loves created man and works within that complex of persons, acts and events. He works

as love. His love for created humanity is seen in his application of redemption, in his leading, guiding and empowering of the people of God.

(iii) Conclusion as to God Being Love

At this point we assume what we have yet to show, that is that God as love is demonstrated by creation, providence, redemption, and the ultimate restoration of all things. However it is not simply that God often shows Himself as love, and we should assume that He is. It is the basic presupposition, the only assumption that will allow any theology to be built. Without the statement 'God is love' nothing can ultimately be rational, given the Biblical view of love, which view we have to adduce by examination of the Scriptures. A Biblical history of love should show God as love in creation, in the Fall of man, in the judgement of the earth by the Flood, in Covenant with Abraham, and the universal promise of blessing to the nations. He should be seen as love in His dealings with Israel, then through the prophets, Christ, and the church. However, this demonstration of love is no vindication of God. He does not have to vindicate Himself as love, or even demonstrate Himself as love. It is just that he is love and the onus is upon us to see that fact, and of course to respond to it.

4. God, Man, and God's Goal of Love

(i) Man Created for God's Glory

In Isaiah 43:5-7 God says to Israel, 'Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring My sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, every one who is called by my name, whom I created for My glory, whom I formed and made.' (Cf. Isaiah 43:20-21, Isaiah 48:10-11, John 15:8, Romans 9:23, 8:28-30, I Peter 2:9-10, 4:11.) That is God has created Israel for His glory. For this glory He formed and made His children. The parallel passage in the N.T. is Ephesians 1:3-14. Here the principle is extended and spelled out in detail. The key statement is in verse 5, 'He predestined us in love to be His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will'. This 'in love' must mean no less than 'for love'. That is His will for us in love is sonship. The verses 7, 12, and 14 all speak of the outcome of this plan as being (a) To the praise of the glory of His grace, and (b) To the praise of His glory.

The primary purpose, then, of creation is to reveal the glory of God. This has been sometimes said to be 'divine egoism'. The charge is crass foolishness, seeing that the revelation of glory to the creation is what heightens and enhances creation itself since (a) Man is in the glory of God and so comes to know himself when he knows God, and (b) Creation which manifests His glory is also seen in its true state. The more God reveals Himself the better for man and the creation. Thus the revelation of glory is a bestowal of grace upon all creation.

(ii) Man Created for Glory

I Corinthians 2:6-10 speaks of a wisdom which was 'decreed before the ages for our glory'. We saw in Isaiah 43:5-7 and Ephesians 1 that man was created to show the glory of God. This glory is shown when man reaches his zenith in glory. Thus in passages such as Romans 8:28-30, I John 3:1-3, I Corinthians 2:6-10, Philippians 3:21 and I Corinthians 15:51-57 it can be seen that God is working to give man full glory. II Corinthians 3:18 speaks of this process as being a

present work of God, whilst II Corinthians 4:17 speaks of suffering bringing a 'great weight of glory'. In Romans 8:17 Paul says again that suffering brings glory.

Whilst we all have certain (though varying) images of glory, yet what, in fact, is the glory of God and the glory of man?² The glory of God is His entire Person, but so far as man is concerned it is His revealed nature. Man is intended to reflect that nature and in so far as he does he shows the glory of God, and in so far as he does not he conceals the glory of God. When we take the two definitive statements concerning God, namely 'God is light' (I John 1:5) and 'God is love' (I John 4:8, 16), then we must say that the glory of God is His holiness and His love. We may even say His being as holiness and love, i.e. His being as holy love. It is exactly this which is man's glory, always keeping in mind the fact that man is contingent for such glory upon God. Man then is created with the goal of holy love in mind.

(iii) The Creation is Created for God's Glory

Psalm 19:1f and Romans 1:19f, both assert that creation shows the glory of God. The seraphim in Isaiah 6 says, 'The whole earth is full of His glory,' and this may even be translated, 'The whole earth is the fullness of His glory.' The passages of restoration such as Isaiah 11, 35, and 55, with the promise of renewal in 65 and 66, as also in Romans 8:18-25, together with the last two chapters of Revelation, give us a picture of perfection and completion which will come at the end of the age. So beautiful are these that they can only be said to be the perfection of love. All creation will be released from bondage to corruption, indignity and futility and participate in the 'glorious liberty of the children of God'. Again this will be love in perfection.

(iv) Conclusion at the Goal of Love

The theme which we have not yet been able to treat is the People of God. It is necessary to know this theme. Love is in the realm of relationships. God's relationship with His elect people is that of love, electing love, but then personal love at the same time. The statement which often comes from God is, 'I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' Sometimes it is pursued under the idea of Father and Son, or Father and Family. Sometimes God's people are likened to a wife, and He to the Husband. Sometimes God is as a Mother, or a Nurse. All of these relationships are personal, and drawn from the whole range of love.

When then, at the end, God's family is about Him, He will be shown quantitatively by the number of His children, and the size of His family, to be Father. Qualitatively He will be shown as Father in great glory for all His children will be wholly like His Son. In other words, when man is perfected in love, then the perfection of God will shine forth, both manifested and vindicated.³

This goal of love is spoken of in the last verses of I Corinthians 13. 'Then shall we know, even as also we have been known' (cf. Gal. 4:9, I Cor. 8:3).

² For a fuller treatment see LFS. 47, The Glory of God, Man, & Creation: A Theology of Glory.

³ More than a hint of this is in I John 4:12 where John says that when we love one another God lives in us and His love has come to its full goal in us, i.e. here, now, in this world!

5. The Nature of God As Love: The Nature of God's Love

GOD AT LOVE

We have mentioned that God's love is shown in His creating of all things, in redeeming all things, and in bringing all things to their ultimate maturation or glorification. We now seek to develop these elements.

(i) God's Love in Creation

When God creates He creates from His essential Self. His creation must be consonant with His nature. That is why Romans 1:19-20 says we can see the eternal power and deity of God 'in the things that have been made'. This doubtless means 'in the nature, operation, acts, disposition of the things that have been made.' The 'things' then, by their function/s, operations, purposes, etc., all show the nature of the Creator. In Genesis 1 God sees the creation within each period as 'good', and the coming together of all things in the final period of creation as 'very good', i.e. functionally, essentially, morally good. This creation can be no less than good since God has made it. Also God is love, so that His creation must be a love-thing (so to speak) or love-oriented in its essential nature. In fact the intrinsic meaning of this creation must be understood on the principle of love. The axiom 'God is good', must mean 'God is love,' but then that goodness or love must be seen in all its elements, that is righteousness, truth, and holiness. When God sees things as 'good' it must mean on the principle of Genesis 2:18, 'It is not good that man should be alone.' That is man cannot function properly in aloneness. 'Good' then is how things must be. So in Ecclesiastes 3:11 the writer says, 'You have made everything appropriate (i.e. beautiful, functional) in its own time.'

We conclude then that any dislocation, distortion or perversion of this innately good creation will subject it to a state of being which is not good. Whilst essentially it may not change, yet practically it is out of true focus.

When the question is asked, 'Why is creation?' then it must be answered, 'To be in accordance with the purpose of God.' Proverbs 16:4 says, 'The Lord has made everything for its purpose' (cf. Isaiah 43:7, 21, Romans 11:36, Revelation 4:11). The purpose of God for humanity is seen in such passages as I Corinthians 2:6-10, II Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 1:3-14, Isaiah 43:5-7, whilst creation's goal is also revealed in passages such as Isaiah 11, 65-66, Revelation 21-22, Romans 8:18-25. The sin of man has caused creation to be subjected to futility, but then this is 'in hope', i.e. it is not doomed always to be under corruption. This is foreign to its intrinsic created being.

When the purposes of creation are examined, then the true view of the creation is revealed. God's purposes are the redemption and glorification of His elect people, and the glorification of His creation, albeit that creation is subjected to purification (cf. Rev. 21:1-2, II Peter 3:10ff). Glorification has two elements, namely maturation and eternalisation, i.e. making immortal and incorruptible.

We must not, then, look at creation in any reductionist sense. We must look at it wholly, from the Biblical vantage point. The why of creation is more important than the how of creation. That its initiation is from God tells us that Father, Son and Spirit all worked together for creation. Out of their unity they produced the creation and its intrinsic unity.

In Revelation 4:7-11 the celestial beings combine to worship God greatly,

and the reason for this is, 'For Thou hast created all things, and by Thy will they existed and were created.' That is the will of Love in the unity of the Godhead has planned and brought into being creation, and the revelation of Scripture has it that it will come to its good end (telos) or completion.

(ii) God's Love in Providence

God's providence^{4*} is a wide subject. It is beyond the scope of this paper, but a study of its elements will show that God has created all things well, and cares for them wholly. Psalms 95 and 104 show His care for His creation. Jesus explains this care in the Sermon on the Mount. In fact God's providence includes the following:

- (a) His creational ordering of all things into their functional and operative categories.
- (b) His government and handling of all events both bad and good.
- (c) His provision for all elements of His creation, even those elements which oppose him (man, Satan, evil powers, etc.).
- (d) His shaping up of history to its true destiny, so bringing it to its full goal.

In Matthew 5:43-48 Jesus points out that this providence is the revelation and demonstration of God's love. In Acts 14:15-17 and 17:24-28 Paul shows the benevolence of God of which the Psalmists continually sing, and to which the prophets advert.

Doubtless this providence is not seen by evil powers and sinful men, but it is there nevertheless. All things hold together in Christ and are upheld by him (Col. 1:16, Heb. 1:2-3). All things are really the Kingdom of God, and His Fatherly care is over it. Whether seen or not by men, God's providence is His \ continual and never-failing love.

(iii) God's Love in Redemption

A. INTRODUCTION

This, of course, is the area in which God's love is most known, and probably because this is where man sees and knows the love of God. Knowing Him as love through redemption he may then proceed to recognise the love of God in creation, in providence, and in the goal of hope. For example John says, 'Behold what manner of love the Father has given us (so) that we should be called the children of God.' That is, calling to sonship is also the love of God, but since sonship follows redemption (Gal. 4:4-6), or rather is the goal of redemption (Romans 8:21-25), yet seeing love in sonship is also the fruit of redemption. It is then necessary to see the nature of redemption and how it is love that is our task. Note that up to this point we have not sought to define love. Even now we do not seek to define it, but at the least we can see that love is manifested by actions and works which are primarily directed to others than the lover, and for others' sakes.

When we speak of God's love in redemption we are touching on a theme which is wider than the immediate redemption of man in Christ. Whilst there can, in fact,

⁴ For providence see articles in Bible Dictionaries, especially The I.V.F . Bible Dictionary, pp.1050-1053.

be nothing wider than God's act of redemption in Christ, we need also to see that true history is salvation history.⁵ Salvation history presupposes that God is the God of grace by nature, and not simply by necessity of salvation. This is seen (a) In the Scriptures which speak of God's choice of His elect people, and their salvation as being prior to creation (e.g. Ephes. 1:4ff, I Cor. 2:6-10, II Tim. 1: 10), and (b) The functional nature of Fatherhood being inherently redemptive (Isaiah 63:16b). Salvation history then is all of history, for what God is about is redeeming His elect, and all history is shaped up in accord with this. Indeed it is at once the motive and the mode of all history, although such a truth is completely hidden from secular interpretations of history.⁶

B. ISRAEL AND THE LOVE OF GOD

There is no doubt that God loves Israel.⁷ Primarily His love is an electing love for God has chosen Israel as His covenant people, but also for His wider (Abrahamic) covenant purposes. Because He has chosen Israel for a purpose means He loves them also personally. Deuteronomy 7:6-11 speaks of the principle. Nothing about Israel made it fitted to be God's people. It is because God loves Israel that He chooses him. As a result He 'keeps covenant and steadfast love' (verse 9 and 12).

Before Israel God chose the fathers (Deut. 4:37 and context), that is they are part of the process of the Abrahamic covenant, which has universal connotation. God loved the Fathers and selected them also. At the same time God loves Israel personally, in that it is not only His instrument for salvation, but requires His love and salvation itself. Hence when it sins God says to Hosea, 'Go again, love a woman who is beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress; even as Yahweh loves the people of Israel'. The principle then is established that God genuinely loves Israel, i.e. not for its 'loveableness', but because He loves. At the same time Israel is chosen to be His instrument for salvation.

We need not pause then to work out the nature of love in Israel, but see that the nation is chosen to be the cradle of Messiah and the means for the fulfilment of God's salvific purposes. Israel for its part must keep 'covenant and steadfast love', and God will remember His covenant, and not utterly destroy Israel. So in Psalm 106:45, 'He remembered for their sakes His covenant, and relented according to the abundance of His steadfast love.' We may mention, though merely in passing, that Israel was expected to respond to God's initiative of love. Some scholars see a difference between election and covenant, stating that election is unconditional, and covenant is conditional, but it is best to see them as different sides of the one coin. Unless called obedience would be impossible. Because of the grace of calling, covenantal obedience is obligatory, indeed mandatory. Love by God presupposes the response of love, i.e. loving obedience, by the loved.

We need then to keep in mind that although God has special love for Israel, this exists within His wider love for the nation. The Covenant with Abraham is with a view to the nations. Hence it is not love with partiality, which is, in reality, no love. When then we see the love of God for Israel we understand not only His grace towards the nation, but His severity towards it when it fails to be the people He desires to make it, and when it fails to accomplish that which is necessary for the ultimate blessing of the nations.

⁵ For a treatment of the subject see articles in Bible Dictionaries, and their bibliographies. See also Salvation History (NCPI, 1977), a series of 16 lectures.

⁶ See also (p.6), "4. God, Man, and God's Goal of Love."

⁷ For a detailed treatment see article "Love" by E. M. Good in the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, pp.164-168 (Abingdon, N.Y., 1962).

One point to which we must refer strongly in Isaiah 63:16 ('For Thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; Thou O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer from of old is Thy name') is that Israel says, 'You are our Father, our Redeemer from eternity is Your name.' Not only is the human father used as an analogy, but the Divine Fatherhood must transcend the human level. A human father must redeem his needy child, and so must the Father redeem His family. This highlights the truth of prophetism that God is always speaking of His love in the present, even if it sometimes be chastising love. But then prophetically He is proclaiming the ways His love will manifest itself through the redemptive work of Messiah, of the Son of Man, the Suffering Servant, and these in the context of the Kingdom of God, and the New Covenant which itself is the Abrahamic Covenant come to fruition in a universal blessing to the nations.

Hence it is to the New Testament we turn in order to see the manifestation of love.

C. JESUS AND THE LOVE OF GOD

(a) Jesus Shows Love

Paul's succinct statement concerning love in Romans 5:5 is that the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who himself has been given unto us. This sums up the work of redemption, especially as applied to the human heart, and the community of God's people. Yet there is a powerful build-up to this point. First John the Baptist comes proclaiming the imminence of the Kingdom, and speaks of remission of sins which will be universal (John 1:29) and of the outpouring of the Spirit. His term indicates the people of God will be baptised in (or, by) the Holy Spirit. Jesus, on his heels, also proclaims the Kingdom at the door, and like John he demands repentance. John points to the man Jesus as the source of the blessings of Kingdom, forgiveness and Spirit. He does not mention love, but it is assumed God loves His people or repentance would not be demanded or the promises of forgiveness, Kingdom and Spirit be given.

When Peter says Jesus 'went about doing all manner of good,' he assumes that this good be understood as practical love. In his teaching Christ demonstrated the love of God in the terms of Luke 4:18 (= Isaiah 61:1). In fact not a lot is spoken directly of the love of God in the Synoptic Gospels. However, in such passages as the Sermon on the Mount and its parallels Jesus does stress God's practical love to His children, as also to His enemies, and enjoins similar love upon true disciples. He also enjoins the mutuality of love amongst the disciples. His words that the Father cares are shown in his healings, exorcisms, and personal care and concern. Yet whilst love is manifested it is the sealing or securing of the love of God for mankind which is the paramount concern of his life. This love he sees in the matter of his crucifixion and resurrection. Again he does not spell it out in literal terms of love. Yet a single statement is enough to light up the whole with the meaning of love when he says, 'Greater love has no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends,' and adds, 'You are my friends.'

In Mark 8:31, 9:31, and 10:32 he stresses the fact of the coming death and resurrection and its indispensability. His experience in the garden of Gethsemane must not be taken as a desire to withdraw from the Cross, but a fear of actually dying through his sorrow in the locale of the garden (cf. Matt. 26:37-38, Hebrews 5:7). His statement of Matthew 26:28 linked the death with the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and other passages. In John 10 he stressed the fact of laying down his life for the sheep, and John 11:49-52 is a powerful bit of prophecy regarding his death for the Family of God.

(b) The Work of the Cross

All this being said, it remains for the work of the Cross and Resurrection to be rationalised as love by the followers of Jesus. Whilst the preachers of the early church in the Book of Acts do not interpret the events of Christ in literal terms of love, yet it is patent that what God has done in Christ is love, especially in the release of man from evil powers and the guilt of his sins. The Epistles powerfully represent the work of Christ and the Father as love. In Romans 5:5-10 Paul shows love to lie in the inability of man to redeem himself being met by the love of God in the saving work of Christ. John has a parallel passage in I John 4:7-10. Peter has similar passages which speak of God's redemptive act (e.g. I Peter 1:18-21, 2:21-24, 3:18). The principle of the Epistles is that God has shown His love in the redeeming work of the Cross and Resurrection. Men ought therefore to love God, and also to love their fellow-man.

We need, nevertheless, to see how God's love is shown by, and actuated in, the Cross. Paul sees man's dilemma as man being sinful, morally impotent either to will or to effect his own salvation, and in fact as being an enemy of God from his heart (Romans 5:5-10, cf. Colossians 1:19-21). Man is irreligious and under wrath. He is dead, inert to God. He is under doom, indeed every action contrary to the righteousness of God is visited with present wrath (Romans 1:18). Man cannot extricate himself from his predicament, but God does in the act of the Cross. This act is propitiation. Propitiation averts the wrath from man, but the wrath is nevertheless poured out upon all sin. This is the meaning of Romans 8:13 where Paul says 'He judged sin in the flesh (of Christ)'. Paul also says 'God made him to be sin, i.e. him who knew no sin'. Peter states it simply, 'He bore our sins in his own body on the Tree.' Paul understands the principle of curse (Gal. 3:10) and says, 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become curse for us' (Gal. 3:13). In II Corinthians 5:14-15 he says, 'We are convinced that if one died for all then did all die.' He has similar language in Romans 6: 1-10 and Galatians 2:19-20. We are left with no doubt that the death was for sin. As a result of this men and women are forgiven and justified.

Peter and John use similar language. John states that the death of Christ is love (I John 3:16) and in I John 4:9-10 states the love is shown by the Son coming to give life, and assures us that that life is possible only through propitiation. In Romans 3:24-26 Paul shows that the propitiation is an act executed by God Himself. The Father (and not the Son) takes the initiative, effecting man's redemption. The Son is loved for sharing this work (cf. John 3:35, 5:17, 10:17, 14:30-31, Matt. 11:27), but undoubtedly the love of God lies in the giving of His Son.

D. THE EFFECTING OF REDEMPTION

It is one thing for God to bring the work of redemption to the point where Christ can cry, 'It is finished!' It is another to apply that redemption. How to get it, so to speak, from the Cross and the Empty Tomb to the heart, mind and spirit of man, is the vital matter. This we are shown, is by the work of the Spirit. He is, as we have seen, the Spirit of love. He has worked patiently through the millenniums of creation to shore up failing man, to restrain evil from wholly destroying the human race. He has worked in salvation history to the point where Messiah has come, fulfilling the prophets through whom the Spirit has spoken. He has worked in the birth, baptism, temptation, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of the Son. Indeed he was the very Spirit of the Son. Christ spoke of his applicative work in John 16:7-11. He said he would be Remembrancer, Teacher, Exhorter (Comforter), and Convictor in regard to himself (the Son) and the Father. At Pentecost this work began in earnest and so the love of God was poured into hearts by the Holy Spirit, who, bringing the gifts of repentance, faith and forgiveness was able thus to effect conversion, regeneration, and sanctification. He inducted men into the state of justification and sonship.

In practice (cf. I Cor. 6:9-11, Titus 3:1-7, II Cor. 3:6, 17, Gal. 5:22-23) the Spirit brought purification of sins to men (Heb. 1:3, 9:14), removed the eternal guilt they had known, renewed the inner man so that they now have the mind of Christ, and brought the gift of eternal life where there had been only death. The very Gift of the Spirit Himself, with his powers of love, fellowship, prayer, worship, guidance and wisdom was love enough from God, yet this Gift simply effected the full redemption of man by applying the work of Christ.

As we shall see, all of this applicative work was in the context of the new people of God, the prophetic community, the true Family of the Father. Hence love was given to create the community, and then given from the community, in the context of its own being. The Kingdom is the Kingdom of the 'the Son of His love', so that transference from the powers of darkness to this Kingdom is love. Yet it is the Father over all, and the Son as Lord of all that constitutes the ongoing love of God of which we shall now speak.

(iv) God's Love Now and in the Eschaton

A. LOVE IS THE PRINCIPLE OF THE ESCHATON

In Romans 8:38-39 Paul says, 'I am sure that...nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' He nominates all the elements which could seek to separate us, but concludes they are unable. He is thus speaking of this present era in which attempts are being made to take us out of the love of God. Earlier in the chapter he speaks of accusation as a force seeking to make us cast doubt upon ourselves, and so upon the love of God.

On the other hand, in Jude 20-21 the writer speaks of keeping oneself in the love of God. If we use the middle voice instead of the passive then it is being kept in the love of God. He recommends certain exercises which help to keep one in God's love. Along with this idea, other N.T. passages direct us to participating more, or increasingly, in the love of God. II Thessalonians 3:5 has it, 'May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God...'. It is not that their hearts are not already in the love of God, but nothing must be assumed as automatic, and nothing must be presumed upon. Hence love is at once both strong and tenuous. It is as though the principle applies to love as much as to anything else, i.e. 'Let him who thinks he stands (in himself) take heed lest he fall.'

This is why there are prayers for increase in love, and commendations when that increase is apparent. As we have said (and will see further), there is virtually no mention of love in Acts, but love is everywhere in the life of the church and its proclamation.

The Epistles, however, are for teaching and since love is a matter of the will the mind and heart must be taught, and will be brought into loving co-operation with God's will. In I Thessalonians 3:11-13 Paul says, 'Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you; and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you, so that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.' Again, in Philippians 1:9-11 he prays a similar prayer. Good as is 'first love' yet it must deepen, broaden and mature. This is in line with his teaching in I Corinthians 13:7-13. Love matures within us as we practise it, and it matures, so to speak, within itself.

We have said that love is the principle of the eschaton. This must be seen from two vantage points:

(a) The last days reaching from Pentecost to Christ's parousia

are the days of the love-proclamation, the Spirit application of redemptive love, and the present indwelling of Father, Son and Spirit (for the latter see John 14:15-23, and compare with I John 4:12-16).

(b) The last days are shaping up to the ultimate unification, filling up, and harmonising of all things in that cosmic reconciliation which is wrought through the power and principle of the Cross. This is seen in Ephesians 1:9-10, 4:10, Colossians 1:19-20, cf. 3:14. These Scriptures need to be studied in depth.

What we will see later, especially in relation to I Corinthians 13 and allied passages, is that the action of love in this age is contributory to the process of building that which will prove to be eternal, and also to be the purpose for which God created.

B. THE ESCHATON THE NEW AGE OF LOVE

In I John 2:7ff John points out that 'the darkness is passing away and the true light is now shining'. In John 1:1-3 he has stated as a principle of all time (from eternity) that darkness is not able to overcome the light. In his epistle he says that he writes to the church a new commandment which is not intrinsically new, but in fact, from a time point of view, it is an old commandment. They have had it from the beginning. When 2:7-11 is compared with 3:9-18 then the following emerges:- The principle of love has been mandatory and functionally true since man's beginning, e.g. Cain and Abel. This law of love is essential to divine-human and human-human relationships. Whatever form the law may appear in (e.g. ten commandments, law of Christ, law of love), it is as old as history. Nevertheless to the one whose eyes are opened it is new, pristine, fresh, brilliant, stunning. The old has become new, although the new was never old. Moreover the happening in time of the redemptive work of God has brought new lustre in the eyes of the regenerated beholder.

The principle then is that the Cross has spelled doom to sin and darkness, to hatred and bitterness. The age of evil and hatred is doomed. Light prevails, and will increasingly prevail. Darkness will go down to the depths 'unhonoured and unsung'. Men then ought quickly to align themselves with the new age, the new love aeon, and know that darkness cannot overcome this light. They must be with it, be with God!

C. THE DYNAMIC OF GOD'S LOVE NOW

We now need to embark on examination of the effecting of God's redemptive love, now, where humanity lives. This really means, on the Johannine principle enunciated in I John 4:7-5:3, that we love when we know and experience God's love. God's love to us evokes our love to God and to others. What then happens to effect this principle? We have seen that the Spirit of love first reveals the love of God to us, effects repentance and faith leading to the reception of the gifts of forgiveness, justification and sonship. This then is the Spirit's application of the work of the Cross. Thus love floods our hearts, by means of which we are inspired to love others both in proclamation of the Gospel, and deeds of love in action. Let us see then how this happens, and whether, in fact, it has happened thus in history.

In I Peter 1:22 Peter states a profound principle. Paraphrased he says something like this: 'You became purified by the truth and power of the Gospel. This purification was not an end in itself but was with a view to loving the brethren purely. So then you can now (and must) love the brethren earnestly.' This comes close to Paul's word in I Timothy 1:5: 'The aim of our charge is love which

issues from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.’

Powerful passages such as Hebrews 1:3 (cf. 9:14, 10:22), I Corinthians 6:9-11, and Titus 3:3-5 show us that the Cross effects total purification. Other passages show us the Cross effects total forgiveness, i.e. of all sins. On the day of Pentecost it is evident that the new community is one which is flooded with love. Why was this so? Was it some deep esoteric work of the Spirit, almost magically effected, or was it a gripping of the will by love in the very removal of pollution and guilt from the human heart? It was the latter and not the former. Guilt is what establishes hate relationships between man and God, and man and man. Such guilt compounds itself by further hatred. Pollution likewise brings deep shame to the human spirit. At Pentecost the coming of the Spirit as Applicator of the work of Christ (Acts 2:38) brought total forgiveness and total purification to the repentant 3,000. Hence the love community was established!

It would be incomprehensible to secular man to say that the heart forgiven and purified sets it for full love relationships. What the believer must see is that love is always in the context of, and has as its constant goal, true holiness. This is seen in I Peter 1:22, I Thessalonians 3:12-13, Philippians 1:9-11, I Timothy 1:5, and in the principles John sets out in his epistles of light and love being of the one ethos.

Forgiveness, justification and cleansing bring, of course, liberation from the power of evil. Hence the love of release is enormous. Man is freed by God and may now love his fellow-beings. Yet even this is not all. Man becomes a son of God, and he lives in the community of the family of God, the true household of love. Hence he has a new Spirit (and spirit) to love. He has family love. It is intimately domestic, it is gloriously wide. He loves the family of the elect, and he loves within the whole range of the Adamic family.

D. THE DYNAMIC AND THE INDWELLING

Or, as we should say, the dynamic of the indwelling. Love in its outworking may well be a matter of imitation, as we see in Ephesians 5:1-2 and other places. Here one imitates the Father and the Son (Elder Brother) because one is already a member of the Family. However that is not all. Ephesians 4:6 speaks of the Father being in all, meaning in all members of the Family. In Galatians 2:20 (cf. Col. 1:27) Paul speaks of Christ living in us, and of this affecting our present life and its style. However, it is the passage of John 14:15-23 that expounds the indwelling of the Triune God. Whilst Matthew 28:19 speaks of God’s people being baptised into the Triune God, yet John 14:15-23 speaks of God coming as Father, Son, and Spirit and living in man. It is in this sense that John speaks of indwelling in his first epistle. In 3:24, 4:4, and 4:12-16 he speaks of God abiding in us, and how we know this because He has given us of His Spirit. It is this abiding which brings love, and aids us in truly loving. Indeed God’s love comes to its full goal when we see His love, and then abide in Him as He abides in us. This parallels the thought of John 15:1-11, where the theme is love and fruitfulness. Again in Ephesians 3:14-19 Paul speaks of the Spirit strengthening the inner man that Christ may dwell there, and so the community of God’s children comes to know the love of Christ (or the love of God in Christ) which is beyond normal human knowledge.

This indwelling, however it may be apprehended subjectively, is primarily an objective fact. It is not dependent for its being upon feelings or emotions.

E. THE MODES OF LOVE IN THIS AGE

So far we have really seen the ‘why?’ of love, i.e. we have seen why God has loved. This is simple: He is love. We have also seen that love is truly

the functional way of creation. We see God loves in order to redeem, and loves through redemption. We have seen that this brings man to love, and to loving. We see that love must be the ultimate meaning not only of God, but consonantly, of His creation. It is His goal and purpose in creation, and of course of redemption. We have seen something of the how of love in God's action. Seeing then, we are commanded to love, and love is what true living is all about, how then do we love, and after what manner must we love?

(a) Love is Mandatory

That is love is a matter of the will because it is commanded. The notion that love must always flow emotionally, must be spontaneous and unprompted, is far from the whole truth. Jesus said, 'My Father loves me because I lay down my life. This commandment have I received of my Father.' Commandments are necessary. They are commission, guidelines, and the way of doing the truth. But they must not be interpreted as heavy domination by an authority. Hence the true subject is eager to know what to do. Since the law of love is the true guideline to authentic action it is received gratefully, and followed with genuine pleasure, even when it entails suffering.

Of course love is mandatory on many grounds. God is love, hence so is His law. The Son found no problem. 'I delight to do Thy will, O Lord,' came easily from his heart. With sinful men it is different. Rebellion is innate and endemic. The regenerated man still needs to make choice at every point to obey. Having made the choice he is glad to be informed as to the mode of obedience. The law guides him, as well as teaches him what to do. All of this leads us on to our first point in the modes of love; love is obedience.

(b) Mode One: love is Obedience

From John 14:15 we see that to love is to obey. 'If you love me you will keep my commandments.' The thought is repeated in I John 2:3-6 where the essence of the argument is, 'To know God (as love) is to keep His commandments. Whoever keeps His word, God's love comes to perfection in him.' In I John 5:1-5 the essence is, 'Loving is paramount. It is the first commandment. His commandments are not heavy or intolerable. To love God is to obey.' This is reinforced by Jesus' statement, 'That the world may know that I love the Father, as the Father has given me commandment, so I do.' This then opens the whole question of authority and obedience which is itself a vast subject. We say in brief that true authority is authority for other's sakes, the exercise of office in love for the other/s. Authority then is love. Consequently (normally speaking), it evokes responsive love. Of course the wider truth is that it is the love of God which has created man, and since man is in the image of love he must obey. Affinity with God gives him the innate thrust to obedience. Hence disobedience is painful primarily because it is a betrayal of the creational principle. Hence it is anguish to the human spirit not to be one with God, and gladly exercising obedience.

(c) Mode Two: love is Giving

We come to the heart of the subject. 'God so loved...that He gave...'. We know He gave His best. His Son was closest and most intimate to Him. The Scriptures are the account of the gifts God gives, i.e. creational life and being, daily providential provision for man's needs. These needs are emotional, material, and intellectual. God's creation is designed to meet these. For sinful man there is the provision of redemption and total reconciliation with God. Man is restored to normality. In redemption his emotional needs are met through repentance and faith and the work of the Spirit as he receives the gifts of forgiveness, justification, regeneration and the Spirit. He is given the gift of

eternal life, and of relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is also reconciled to his fellow human beings. Brought into the family of God he is given one or more gifts of Christ (distributed by the Spirit) and uses these along with the natural creational gifts he has previously received. Each day grace and love keep him supplied where he has needs. He is also aided to work out the truth in mind and life in the midst of false and evil actions of men and evil powers.

This being so, man is committed to loving, that is to giving. 'God loves an hilarious giver' (II Cor. 9:7) is said because a true giver reflects God the Giver, and James 1:17 nominates God as the Giver, stating that authentic giving comes only from God. Paul says we must give with simplicity (Romans 12:8).

Giving is the way of loving in that it meets the needs of persons from the supplies it possesses. Man is a needy person. His primary needs are emotional, but then the temporal and the eternal are bound together so that physical and intellectual needs are deep. I John 3:17 says that if any man has this world's goods and sees his brother had need, then to give is to love. Love is discerning the needs of another and seeking to supply those.

In one sense our supplies are limited, yet out of the grace of God we are able to supply so many needs. Fallen man has very deep needs since he must see the true nature of God and respond, thus bringing him back to functional normality. Often Christians feel repelled by evil, and the character distortions of others. Hence their love needs to surmount these impediments.

Giving must always be understood in the context of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The best giving is sharing what one receives from Them. Or it may be said that God loves through us, never withholding the needed supply. In practice giving means doing deeds. Loving is giving by doing. The love-deed is the deed which meets the need.

Giving then is on three levels of operation.

1. We give ourselves for others. This is seen in John 15:12-14. True love lays down its life for others. This is seen again in I John 3:16. Yet laying down our lives may not simply be martyrdom but in the bus queue, or driving a vehicle (with love), or anything. Ephesians 5:25 and Acts 20:28 shows how Christ really loved the church and laid down his life for her (cf. Gal. 2:20, Ephes. 5:1-2).

2. We give ourselves to others. In II Corinthians 8:5 Paul speaks of believers who gave themselves to the Lord. This was the response of their love to His. In human relationships we are reconciled to one another through redemptive reconciliation. The creational order is total unity of the human race. Hence to love is not to withhold but to give ourselves to one another. This is known under such terms as 'fellowship', 'fellowship of the Spirit', 'unity of the Spirit', and so on. In practice it is being of 'one heart and one soul' (Acts 4: 32), so much so that no one considered any possession his own. This was true loving.

3. We totally identify with others. The passage of John 17:20-26 shows that the Father and the Son identify with each other, each being in each other. This is their unity. This is true love, as the context shows. It approximates to the 'one—flesh' union of man and wife. I Corinthians 6:17 says, 'He who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.' The believer is united first to the Lord, and then to others.

Direct identification cannot be, by nature of the case, but when fellowship is with the Father and the Son, then it is so with all.

It is in and on these three levels that true giving takes place. This giving is continuous, according to the need of others, and flows from its source, God Himself, Who alone can discern the need truly, and so supply it through His people.

(d) Mode Three: Love is Forgiving

God is known in His true nature as Love, through forgiveness. This is clear from Jeremiah 31:31-34 (cf. Matt. 26:28), I John 4:7-10, Romans 5:5-10 and similar passages. Jesus said, in effect, of the sinful woman, 'She has loved much because she has been forgiven much.' Forgiveness is the say of love for sinners, and evokes the response of love from the ones forgiven. Forgiveness is free to man but costly to God. Its cost defines the immensity of love. Love is not simply the disposition of God, for God may not forgive against His innate holiness and righteousness. His love is shown in that He provides the just basis for forgiveness through the Cross. His disposition of love and forgiveness is substantiated by that work in which satisfaction is offered for the violations done to His holiness by sinful men.

Being forgiven one forgives. Being loved one loves. The first point is made strongly in Matthew 18:21ff, and the second in I John 4:11-12. It is intolerable to think of a man being forgiven the enormity of his sin (and at such cost) and for that man not to forgive the piffling sin of another. To him such sin may not appear to be piffling, but by contrast it is. Man, himself being a sinner, cannot understand the nature of sin, and is not detached enough to measure it. In any case sin is primarily against God, and not against man. Psalm 51:4 shows David confessing that his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah was really against God. There is a deep insight in this confession. The prodigal says he will say to his earthly father, 'I have sinned against heaven and before you'.

To love is to forgive. Hence passages such as Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 2: 12-13, II Corinthians 2:10-11 and Matthew 6:14-15 all enjoin forgiveness because one has been forgiven. I Peter 4:8 says that love covers the multitude of sins. This must mean that one does not look at the sins of another in the sense that I Corinthians 13:5 says 'Love thinketh no evil'. The mode of forgiveness (Col. 3: 13) is 'as the Lord has forgiven you, so forgive'. This must mean immediate forgiveness for thus God forgives. One must not make the other sweat it out. To do so is to indicate that one thinks God does just that with oneself.

Forgiveness is primarily a matter of relationship. Justification is primarily a matter of law. Hence when one forgives one is saying that he loves. When one is unforgiving one is saying he does not love. Forgiving is remitting or bearing up and away the failure of the other. Technically the English word 'forgive' is like the French word pardonner which means to give back'. That is we restore to another that which he has lost by his failure. In the Scripture sins are blotted out, washed away, borne away, changed from crimson to pure whiteness, remembered no more. The liberating effects of such treatment surely bring genuine love. True forgiveness heals hurts, angers, resentments and internal and relational wounds. 'By his wounds are our wounds truly healed.' Forgiveness releases from so much bodily and mental sickness. Not to forgive is denying the work of Christ in us, and denying the work of Christ for others. We are pinning back on them, so to speak, that which he has borne on the Cross for them. We are denying the wonder of the death, and minimising its cost.

(e) Mode Four: Love is Serving Others

In Galatians 5:13 Paul says, ‘...by love be servants one of another’. He equates this with loving one’s neighbour. Christ pointed out that the one who would be greatest should be servant. He himself was among them as one who served. This is of course identical with our Second Mode, ‘Love is Giving.’ One gives in service. To serve is functionally part of creational man. In Revelation 7:9-14 we see men serving God because He has made their robes pure in the death of Christ. In Romans 12:1-2 and Hebrews 9:14 it is again the mercies of God which draws the response of service. To serve man is to serve God. God Himself is the One who has served His creation from the beginning by creating and preserving it, and by redeeming it.

The practical fact is that when we serve the very act grips the person/s served. For a time there may be suspicion but ultimately the truth will break through. Paul’s talk of the use of the gifts is wholly on the basis of serving others. As we have seen to use the gifts for self-display or pride cancels their reality. Gifts are to be used in the service of love. We must observe that service is by no means servility. It is, in fact, true nobility.

(f) Mode Five: Love is Perfecting Oneself for Others

It is true that the perfection or imperfection of another has nothing to do with the nature of love. Love is caused by nothing but itself. God loves because He is love. He alone, then, can command love. Humans cannot command love of one another, but they can expect it on the basis of the divine mandate to love. At the same time true love sets about eliminating the wrong elements and perfecting the true elements. In creation God has greatly endowed man with gifts and graces, and in redemption He adds even more of these elements. To develop and use them in the service of others, and to eliminate wrong habits, idiosyncrasies and the like is true love. In the Song of Solomon the bride and the bridegroom prepare themselves, each for the other. In other words they make it easier for the other to love. Love is not intended to be a Stoical operation of the will. Love covers the faults, and loves simply because it loves, but it is delighted by the considering spirit of the other.

God, and Christ in God, are spoken of as ‘altogether lovely, the fairest of ten thousand, the lily of the valley’. One sees the Bride having bathed, purified and scented herself, serenely relaxed, joyously expectant. This is true love. Love prepares itself for giving.

Even surmounting this is the care of the one for the other. In Ephesians 5 Christ gives himself for this church. He nourishes and cherishes her, and he purifies her by the washing of water and the Word. In this sense he is not only desirable by reason of his being, but his love goes out to beautify the other. Love in beautifying itself gives honour to the other, evokes a similar action, and seeks to enrich the paramount relationship that is granted to human beings.

(g) Mode Six: Love is Suffering

The essence of human suffering lies in the unknowing of things. A carefully exegeted theodicy may well satisfy the academic, but the personal problem of pain and suffering still remains. This is epitomised in Christ’s cry, ‘My God! My God! Why did You forsake me?’ It is suffering after suffering. It is from the vantage point of suffering endured that Christ suffers. If he knows the whole why of his suffering, then that rationality reduces suffering. The deepest suffering of man is in the lack of knowledge of why he suffers. Christ as Son of Man said there were things he did not know. He suffered as man for men, hence his cry, ‘My God! My God!’ rather than, ‘My Father! My Father!’

Had he not suffered as man for men, and had he ameliorated that suffering by adverting to his deity then the human race would never have known true love. In the work of the Cross he gave himself for men as the Scriptures so often depict him. Also he gave himself up to the entirety of suffering that is necessary to redeem the human race. His identification with man was as strong as his identifying them with himself. Hence the statement, 'We are convinced that if one died for all then did all die.' It is as intimate as 'I have been crucified with Christ'. In such identification Christ gives himself to man as well as for him.

Much, if not most of the text of Scripture is given up to the matter of suffering. The mystery of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah only has some resolution in the suffering Messiah of the Gospels. Love is not only shown by suffering, but love is suffering. The love that does not suffer is not love. The love that does not sacrifice is not love. Yet suffering produces glory (II Cor. 4:16ff, cf. Rom. 8:17f). At the same time, suffering is not the price of glory which man pays. That price has already been paid. The glory of the Cross is the suffering for it is love. Suffering, for true man, is the way of glory. One cannot truly love unless one suffers, and often this suffering has to be without the knowledge of sight. It can only possess the knowledge of faith.

Christ is the true paradigm for love which suffers. In essence this paradigm is repeated in men such as Stephen and Paul. The fellowship of Christ's suffering is theirs, and they fill up the suffering which is lacking in the body and which is essential for it. Peter, in his first epistle, gives a powerful rationale of love, but he derives it from the Cross. It is contained in his statement, 'Jesus Christ, whom not having seen you love; whom seeing not you believe and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' The preparedness to love and (so) suffer arises from the knowledge of love, i.e. as it is in Christ.

It must be said that suffering does not suffer. That is that as 'they counted it all joy that they were permitted to suffer to His sake,' knowing suffering to be a gift (Phil. 1:29), so the suffering of love is not looked upon as a burden or an imposition. In suffering one gives but does not measure the giving. Sacrifice is not 'giving until it hurts' but rather, 'giving until it hurts not (to be able) to give.' That is true love.

(h) Some Elements of the Nature of Love

I CORINTHIANS 13.

In addition to the modes of love which we have adduced, some direct descriptions of love are found in the Scriptures. For the most part an understanding of love is assumed. However in I Corinthians 13 Paul sets out an admirable description of love. The essence of his chapter is as follows:

Verses one to three tell us that if we have the charismata (the gifts of Christ through the Spirit) and use them without love they are a contradiction in terms. Gifts are for the use of love.

Verses four to seven tell us what or how love is, and what it does not do, as also what it does do. We will consider some of these elements below.

Verses eight to twelve speak of the gifts as useful but transient. They are not, of themselves, love, but in the service of love. However, their use will one day be outlived. They are, so to speak, scaffolding for the building. The building, love itself, or love's outcome, maturity, is what matters. Perhaps Paul is saying gifts are for the primary stages, but love's maturity (i.e. perfection in love) is the ultimate. In this perfection we not only see God, and all things, but know as we are known. That knowledge is wonderful.

Verse thirteen states the eternal principle, that whilst here faith and hope are present with love, yet they subserve love. Love is the greatest. Perhaps Paul means that in the ultimate faith and hope are required for love. Love stands alone, and is eternal.

When we come to the first section we see that Paul recognises there can be imitation love. This is also suggested in Romans 12:9, 'Let love be genuine,' and I Peter 1:22, 'love sincerely'. Giving is not always loving, though loving is always giving. Section two is most important. The gift-user has often become proud, arrogant, censorious, impatient. Against this love is patient and kind. These two speak of the most gentle and intimate elements of God. They are deeply moving elements when found in human beings. Fault-finding, and the compiling of evil statistics about others is abhorrent to true love. Seeing the genuine best in people is a delight to love. Verse seven is perhaps the most powerful description of love in what it does that has ever been written in all human writing. 'Love bears all things,' does not mean that love puts up with everything. It comes close to I Peter 4:8, 'Love covers the multitude of sins.' This love actually takes into itself the faults and failures of others and bears them, much in the same manner Christ bore our sins. It so loves that it bears in order to destroy the evil. 'Love believes all things,' means that it believes for the person, even against his own self-distrust and pessimism. It believes for him, that he will come to love's bounty and be transformed. 'Love hopes all things,' means that love sees the desired goal as completed, and the loved one at home in love. 'Love endures all things,' means love takes hurts, negative reactions against itself, harm and persecution, including misunderstanding, and does not itself react, or become hurt. To love feeling hurt is wrong and destructive. Hence love hangs loose to all such venom and hatred. In so doing it neutralises the evil. 'Love never fails,' means that in all things love loves on. The root thought here is parallel with that of Ephesians 6:24 where Paul speaks of 'love undying', i.e. 'love incorruptible', 'love eternal'.

Finally in this chapter Paul points to the maturing nature of love, i.e. it matures the one who loves. The first love spoken of in Revelation 2:4 is full of ferment and joyous yeasting. It is uninstructed, spontaneous and lusty. It is often gauche and hubristic. In Revelation 2:19 the first works of the first love are compared with the second works. The latter are better. This is the mature love of which Paul speaks in Philippians 1:9-11 and I Thessalonians 3:12f. In I Corinthians 13:8-12 Paul speaks of the ferment of charismata giving way to the matured spirit. Love gives the true knowledge. Indeed in the light of Ephesians 3:16-19 it is knowing what cannot be known. It is at last knowing as one has been known.

THE LOVE THAT BUILDS.

The love that matures the lover, is at the same time the love that builds.⁸ Paul's famous dictum 'Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up,' brings us to what is almost the most important fact of our essay. Again in Romans 14:19 Paul says, 'Let us then pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding.' Later we will

⁸ 'Love builds up. It builds the work of the future. Agape (love) stands under the sign of the telos (the goal, the ultimate completion). This is the great truth of I Corinthians 13. For this reason love is the heavenly gift, surpassing all others, the kath hyperbole hodos ("the highest way of all"), which not only stands at the heart of the trinity of faith, love and hope but is also greater than the other two. Faith and hope bear the mark of this defective aeon (age, system). "Love never falls, fails, dies, perishes, ceases". With love the power of the future age already breaks into the present form of the world. As for Jesus, so for Paul, agape is the only vital force which has a future in this aeon of death.' (Theological Dictionary of the N.T., Kittel, Eerdmans, Michigan, 1971, Vol. 1, p.51.)

see that love is both processive and progressive, and that it is contributory, all along the way, to what God has designed for eternity. Here we see its building powers. When in I Corinthians 13:8 Paul says, 'Love never ends,' he means 'Love never corrupts.' In his translation Dr. Way says, 'Love's flower petals never fall.' He means that whereas material flowers lose their petals and die, love never dies. Indeed it creates or builds that which is everlasting. The heart of this is found in I Corinthians 3:10-15 where Paul speaks of building. One lays upon the foundation of Christ. This is the love that builds up. The elements, gold, silver and precious stones are opposed to wood, hay and stubble. The fire destroys the latter but merely cleanses the former. What then will be the fire that will test at the last Day? The answer must be, 'His love.' 'Our God is a consuming fire,' and 'God is love,' are mutually inclusive, of the same order. Love will test whether what we have done is of love. What is of love is opposite to what Paul speaks of in I Corinthians 13:1-3. There love is simulated by a selfish use of the gifts. This will be shown by the fire, and indeed consumed by it. They that sow to the Spirit will reap everlasting life. These will receive the full reward. Theirs was not imitation love, designed to win the plaudits of men.

What do we build? Some edifice most evidently. In Ephesians 4:11-16 the gifts are used in the service of love, in the service of building up. Thus the outcome is the true people of God which 'makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.' In I Corinthians 10:17 Paul has said, 'We are one body.' The body, then, is building up in love. Each member contributes by love to the growth. This body will be eternal. The results of love will remain forever. The figure of the Body is parallel with that of the Temple in Ephesians 2:19-22 (cf. Rev. 21; 1-5), and doubtless relates to what we saw in I Corinthians 3. Colossians 2:19, in speaking of growth, says, 'It grows with the growth that is from God,' i.e. when man loves with God's love that love causes growth, and that love builds up.

The inference then is that nothing done out of love ever fades or is lost. It remains for all eternity. This principle understood, every act of love becomes eternally significant and genuinely useful.

THE LOVE THAT DEVELOPS.

We have glanced briefly at the character growth which comes from love. In I Thessalonians 1:3 we see the labour of love which the members exercise. In 3: 11-13 the prayer of Paul is for developing love, or the love that develops the lover. In II Thessalonians 1:3 Paul says 'the love of everyone of you for one another is increasing,' yet he prays in 3:5 that the Lord direct their .. the love of God. There is no point where love is not needed or growth in love is not necessary. In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul really subsumes the fruit of the Spirit under the main heading of love. All elements, i.e. joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are, so to speak, the children or progeny of love. In I Corinthians 13 love is patient and kind. In II Timothy 1:7 self-control is mated with love. Of course love is poured into our hearts by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5), and so the fruit of the Spirit is not our fruit, but the Spirit's. At the same time Paul is urging that we become habituated in the experience of the fruit of the Spirit.

We come now to look more deeply at Philippians 1:9-11 and I Thessalonians 3: 11-13, and we see that those to whom Paul writes are going more deeply into love. We have said elsewhere that love knows no degrees. That is true, yet man experiences more and more of the love that has no degrees. He knows it in increasing degree. Experience in love brings increasing knowledge and discernment. It causes the lover to test (without partiality) and discover and approve the good and excellent things. The outcome of this way of life is a life that is filled with the fruits of righteousness. One is, so to speak, chock-a-block with worthy fruitfulness. One is pure and blameless. One has a heart established in holiness.

This is the principle of the heart that is pure and from which flows love. These things, as in our former section, are elements which become eternal. Yet it is not as though love seeks to upbuild itself for its own benefit and returns. Rather it is seeking to edify and mature others, but in so doing causes itself to grow and mature in love.

THE LOVE THAT LIBERATES.

When Paul says, ‘as having nothing, yet possessing all things,’ (II Cor. 6: 10, cf. I Cor. 7:29-31) he is pointing to the truth of I Corinthians 3:21-23, namely, ‘All things are yours.’ Love does possess. God has chosen a people for His own possession. Zephaniah 3:17 speaks of God crooning and delighting over His possession. In other places He expresses His jealousy when others would touch His possession. Yet curiously love is for liberating the loved. Thus the father of the prodigal releases his son into false liberty that he might find true liberty. By not possessing what he possesses he ultimately truly possesses, for the love that responds is involuntary.

To need to possess destroys true possession. To need to be loved destroys the true response of love. To take the initiative in love is to love truly. Hence love is always seeking the freedom of another. It is the freedom given which binds the loved to the lover. Yet the lover has to be in that place of true freedom which is that he is free not to do what he is free to do. Paul underlines this principle in Romans 14:15. He sums it up by saying, ‘If your brother is being injured by what you eat (or do, legitimately), you are no longer walking in love.’ Because the lover considers the beloved he wishes for his true welfare and places his own in second place.

THE LOVE THAT LIVES FREELY UNDER AUTHORITY.

The Fall brought an innate rejection of authority. Authority that is true authority is concerned for those over whom it is placed, for it is placed over them only for their welfare. Hence when it corrects, directs, protects, provides for, and seeks to bring to maturity it is fulfilling the mandate given it. The one exercising authority can only be free in serving. Likewise those under authority can only be free in obedience. In this case obedience is responsive love. That is why Paul says in I Thessalonians 5:12-13 (cf. Hebrews 13:7, 17, I Peter 5:2, 5), ‘...respect those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you. Esteem them very highly in love because of their work.’

The Father is head of Christ. Christ is the head of the man. Man is the head of the woman (his wife). This is the ontological order of authority This is its hierarchy. It is the hierarchy of love. Freedom is known only in submission. True submission is love, for it is from the heart (cf. Romans 6:17, Deut. 30:6). The authority of love is met with the obedience of love (I John 5: 3).

6. The Ultimate Goal and Outcome of Love

In Ephesians 1:5 Paul says, ‘He predestined us in love to be His sons through Christ Jesus.’ In love the Father planned the end, the goal. Even in this temporal world much of that goal is reached. We become sons. We also become loving sons, and loving brethren. In I John 4:12 we read, ‘No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love has come to its full goal in us.’ This is an amazing statement. In I John 2:5 an equally amazing statement is made: ‘Whoever keeps His word, in him truly God’s love has come to its full goal.’ All of this is a foretaste of the ultimate goal.

We have seen that every work of love is edifying. It builds something.

That something remains. Each love act is added to what was before. Love matures the lover. In some way, then, love is progressive. Its building is contributory to the end-goal. In that sense God's act is processive. As in I Corinthians 15: 24-28 Christ progressively subdues the hostile elements of enmity and evil, so progressively the lover matures and learns to love. In the process he is contributing to the ultimate outcome. He scarcely knows how. He scarcely knows what. He cannot see what is being built. He can only love, and trust that his love is contributory. He is for that which mutually upbuilds in and by love.

The outcome of God's love in history is clearly stated. In Ephesians 1:10 God's plan for the fullness of time is to unite all things in Christ, that is things celestial and terrestrial. These are the things which God as Father has created through the Son (cf. Col. 1:15-17, I Cor. 8:6, Heb. 1:2). Having created he has redeemed them, and having redeemed them he has repristinated them.

In Ephesians 4:10 Christ fills all things. Romans 8:18-25 shows the creation subjected to futility, i.e. emptiness. Christ fills all things. He fills them with himself as Mediator-Creator and Mediator-Redeemer. His fullness gives them true being, ontological authenticity. In fact they are filled with love (cf. Ephes. 3:16-19).

In Colossians 1:19-21 the context is set for the reconciliation of all things. They are reconciled by love, i.e. by the blood of His Cross. What was awry is now harmonised. Hence in Colossians 3:14 Paul states the principle, '... love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.' Throughout history evil has been fissiparous. It has been divisive. It is awryness, dislocation, disorientation from the real, the true, the eternal. Evil in all its enormous effort and action has never accomplished anything. One simple action of love vastly outweighs the totality of evil's so-called accomplishments.

The goal of love then is the fulfilment of the intention of the glory of God. From whatever angle it may be seen - the new reconciled heavens and earth, the family of the redeeming Father, the brethren of the true Elder Brother, the Bride of the true Bridegroom, the defeat of all evil and the triumph of truth, the Eternal Holy City, and the revealed Father and the Lamb - the goal of God has been fulfilled. Seeing this to be so we must keep in mind that the goal will only have been accomplished by the work of the Triune God. It is the Father who initiates, the Son who mediates, and the Spirit who is the agent of this work of love. We must see that God's determination to glorify Himself in the revelation of His Being as love is really the story of history. Human glorification of one's self is looked upon with distaste, but the revelation of His glory by God is His gift to mankind. Man, in the image of God, can only know as he is known when he truly knows God. Without that Self-revelation of God, by God, man cannot attain to his fullness. He cannot otherwise reach maturity.

The passages then, which speak of the ultimate triumph of good over evil, are those which show the true triumph of love. Whether it be where nothing hurts in all His holy mountain, or where the river of life with its trees (whose leaves are for the healing of the nations) flows from the City of God, all is the matter of eternal love. It is to these waters mankind is invited. It is from these we may drink at the leading and invitation of the Lamb.

This is the true meaning and nature of love, of God Himself.

—APPENDIX ONE—

IMPARTIAL LOVE

Matthew 5:43-48 makes it clear that God's love is for all men, without partiality. This is why we stated that love is total, and not in degrees. We know that God demands we should love Him with all our being - heart, mind, soul and strength. We have also seen the principle of I John 4:19, 'We love because He first loved us.' He takes the initiative and we are thus spurred on to love.

There are problems, however. Jesus says, 'My Father loves me because I lay down my life' (John 10:17). In John 14:21 and 23 Jesus makes it clear that the one who keeps Christ's commandments and loves him will be loved by the Father. Do these statements not seem to say that God loves certain persons because of their obedience? This would seem to be so in the face of these statements.

The truth must remain, whatever, that God loves all men, and without partiality. However, it is also true that mankind hates God, and hates Him wholly (cf. Romans 5:10, Col. 1:21, Romans 1:30, etc.). Therefore man cannot see God as love and so respond in love. Where the world convicts men of sin, righteousness and judgement, there will come a revelation of God as love. Where there is the response of active repentance and faith with the consequent reception of the gifts of forgiveness, love and life, there will be love to God. God's love, then, is experienced, and God is loved. That is only those who love God in response to His love will receive the true benefits and fruits of love. Hence Jesus says (John 14:15), 'If you love me you will keep my commandments.' Man will only love in response to love. Then he will proceed to obedience, and the love of God will be increasingly experienced. Then man will know in a further revelation that God loves him. So obedience will be further compounded and accelerated. By nature of the case, man cannot love until he is loved. Hence we conclude that God's loving us is not contingent upon our obedience, but our obedience is contingent upon His loving us, from which we will further realise the love of God. To put it in another way, 'Only he, who being loved loves and is obedient, really gets the good of the love of God.'

A further puzzling element confronting us is the statement, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated (Malachi 1:1-5, cf. Romans 9:13).' Does this not contradict Matthew 5:43-48? The answer is that Matthew 5:43-48 is stating a universal principle. God loves all men, and some of them are His constituted enemies, as indeed was Esau. By despising his birthright he has shown his hatred for God (cf. Hebrews 12:14-17). The solution must be that the Scriptures are talking about electing love. In regard to election God has chosen Jacob and not Esau. The rationalisation of, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I loved less,' is really not admissible. It is an attempt to justify God, and does not accomplish this intention. Not to elect Esau (cf. Genesis 25:19-26) is regarded as hating him. Yet in no way can such hatred be regarded as emotional or directly personal. The evidence of this is that Christ calls on his followers to hate father and mother and brethren for his sake. Here too, no emotional hatred is called for - which would contradict his demand for true love for all. The explanation is that one must not love any other more than one loves him. All of this takes us back to the principle that we love God totally with our total beings. Other loves then fall into place. Indeed if we do not love God totally, then we cannot love others with our whole love.

Esau then is not hated as regards God's universal love, but only as regards electing love. These two elements do not oppose one another. #

—APPENDIX TWO—

MANY KINDS OF LOVE

We are often shown that certain words in the Greek, and also in the Hebrew, for love have different meanings and usage, and this would be roughly correct. Commonly it is said that *eros* is the word for sexual love, from which we derive the term erotic. It is said that *philein* or *philia* speaks of rich affection, and this of a beautiful nature. It is said to describe love between persons. The word *agape* has been said to be God's love and is therefore a word of unique nature. Such generalisations do not prove to be true. Bishop Nygren (*Agape and Eros*, SPCK, London, 1957) has shown that *eros* is the word indicating the highest form of love which can stem from man. C. S. Lewis has used *eros*: to depict high sexual love. In John 21:15-18 Jesus uses the terms *agape* and *philein* interchangeably. Some exegetes have tried to show that Jesus distinguishes the meanings but such exegesis is highly doubtful. The truth is that the two words often carry the same value. *Eros* is not used in the N.T., but every kind of love given to creation by God must be essentially *agape*. Because man's sin perverts all loves does not mean that essentially they are not true loves. Sexual love seen in its true state is truly *agape*.

The whole matter is resolved by noting that in such passages as I John 2:15-17 and II Timothy 4:10 the verb *agapeo* (from which *agape* derives) is used of loving the world as against loving God. This settles the matter. One can exercise a perverse *agape*. The word then is not reserved wholly for divine love. #

—APPENDIX THREE—

THE TRIAD OF FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE

It is quite an interesting fact that these three are so often found together, especially in the New Testament. They are thus found in Romans 5:2-5, Galatians 5: 5f, Colossians 1:4f, I Thessalonians 1:3, 5:8, Hebrews 6:10-12, and I Peter 1:21f. Why is this? What is the meaning of the triad? The debate as to whether faith and hope will always be present as indeed love surely will be is quite unprofitable. I Corinthians 13:13 does not mean either that they will always be present or that they will not. The point is that love is paramount over faith and hope. Without doubt faith and hope are necessary in this age in a way they will not be required in eternity, because of the current presence of evil, the nature of sin, and so on. However, this matter is not really under discussion. One exegesis has it that faith and hope and love are three gifts from God and obtain now, but that greater than these is God's own love, which will remain forever. This is doubtful, since the love we exercise is not our love, anyway, but His.

At the same time, whilst God is love, He is not faith and hope, so that love is subserved by faith and hope. Romans 5:5 says that 'hope makes not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us.' Hope then is dependent upon love. In II Thessalonians 2:16 hope is again linked with love: '...God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal

comfort and good hope through grace...'. I John 3:1-3 speaks of the love of God and then talks of 'everyone who has this hope within himself...'. The truth is that without love there is no hope. Love produces hope, giving it true basis for operation.

In Galatians 5:5-6, Paul says, 'For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love.' Here faith and hope are coupled. Then also faith works through love, not love through faith. The love of God is the basis for faith (as for hope). Paul is really saying that faith exerts itself by love, i.e. without love faith is lifeless. It lacks the object (God, the saving Gospel, the living experience of God's love, the motivation to love) to fire and energise it. So the love of Christ constrains us (II Cor. 5:14); so we labour in love (I Thess. 1:3); so we love Christ (I Peter 1:8) and the Father (I Cor. 2:9f).

We conclude then that God as love, and His works of love in creation, redemption, and the (ultimate) glorification of man are what evoke faith, and energise : it. They are what bring hope to birth and sustain it. After all, hope is really faith with a future look! #

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