

and ignore those petty, paltry phantasmal grades of station and occupation? Let us follow Darwin's idea so far as to choose our companions by natural selection. Young or old, wise or witty, grave or gay, philosophical or philanthropical—let all choose companions after their own hearts, leaving out the paltry distinction as to how many dollars a man may possess, or appear to possess.

Let us meet together with love in our hearts, friendship in our faces, charity in our souls, and, if possible, a few liberal ideas in our brains.

N. CLITHEROE.

FORBEARING.

A Sermon by the Rev. Henry Wilkes, D.D., preached at Zion Church, Montreal.

"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."
EPHESIANS iv. 2.

One of the practical virtues included in the general injunction to walk worthy of the Christian's calling: and that injunction follows one of Paul's grand exhibitions of the infinite riches of grace in Jesus Christ our Lord. In the second chapter of the Epistle he closed for a moment his wondrous argument by rearing—in figure—believers of every name into a magnificent building to be "a habitation of God through the Spirit." And now after a parenthesis of solemn and loving exhortation—for the third chapter is a parenthesis—he returns to the subject of unity, oneness in Christ to which they are called, and urges among other elements of that unity the cultivation of MUTUAL FORBEARING. This is our theme now.

I.

What is its nature?

The word used literally signifies "*holding back*," i.e., from anger, or revenge on account of differences and provocations. Sometimes the word "suffer" is employed as a translation, as, when our Lord speaking of a faithless generation, exclaims, "How long shall I suffer you?" Forbearance endures patiently the contradiction and provocation, it pities and forgives the offender, holding back the arm of vengeance. Do you ask for the highest example? The ever blessed God supplies it whose longsuffering with rebels is so great, and whose tender mercy prevails over deserved wrath. The sons of men provoke Him to holy anger by their sins; He continues to hold them in life and to make that life sweet and pleasant; they thank Him not, nor praise His name; they persist in their guilty course, and yet He is longsuffering and of tender compassion. The Apostle was so affected by this scene of outrage and wrong on the one side, and of patience on the other, that he exclaims in an appeal that should cut us to the heart, "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" The Lamb of God most wondrously forbears with those whom He came to redeem and save, to whom He addresses the invitation of mercy, and who yet for months, and years oft-times reject the proffered grace, turn a deaf ear to His appeals and continue to serve with a will His and their great enemy.

Like every other virtue, forbearance has its root in principle—here the principle of love. "Forbearing one another in love." The Divine longsuffering is thus deep-rooted in the love of His heart; He forbears in love. It exhibits the riches of His goodness. Ours must spring from the same source. Love on our part is the fulfilling of the law—the law of the Kingdom. We are not Christians unless we love. Christ's great commandment is love—brotherly love, as well as love to Him. The plant of forbearance can only grow in this soil—can only be fruitful as it is thus nourished.

And herein is found the essential difference between the Christian virtue, and the mere good nature of some who do not take the trouble to be angry. It may be that credit is obtained for forbearance on the part of many who are indifferent—who are unwilling to trouble themselves with contention and excitement—who are fond of ease and quiet, and have not moral energy enough to be indignant. They dislike altercation; they are too careless as to results to be at the pains of contending; hence they let things take their course. There is no principle in their forbearance. But that under consideration, rooted in the principle of love, is often exercised amid a sore struggle of contending emotions. It involves wrestling with self, a very hard struggle sometimes, yea desperate fighting in order to conquest and victory. It puts the bit and bridle upon a tongue that is about to utter bitter maledictions; it keeps down the arm that would be otherwise uplifted for fierce onslaught; it whispers peace, and thus allays the angry passions of the soul. It masters the rising waves of strife and confusion, and breathes among the elements of contention, the spirit of peace.

How the principle of love works in the matter of forbearance is exemplified in the family. There it keeps together in oneness of aim and purpose husband and wife, father and mother. No two can dwell together without occasions for the exercise of forbearance. Love has not much difficulty in securing what is needful. Moreover, how easy is it for the parent to exercise forbearance towards his child—love makes it easy. Sometimes indeed, as in the case of Eli, he forbears where he ought not, but when he does as duty demands, express displeasure or inflict chastisement, he does not drive them out and disown them. He yet forbears.

The Apostle is addressing Christians united in the fellowship of the Church, and what has been said may help us to understand what the Lord would have us do in that relation. There is supposed love, honest, fervent and discriminating love, among the brotherhood, for it was clearly understood in the Primitive Church that faith in Christ working by love, in the path of obedience was the qualification of membership. A broad distinction was made between the unbelieving and the believing—the disobedient and the obedient, and it was assumed that therefore in the Church the law of love would prevail. The Lord had clearly presented this in His sketch of the judgment. Those on His right hand were distinguished from those on His left, by brotherly love and its manifestation in action.

There is supposed not only mutual love, but also provocation, annoyance, differences, difficulties, or there would be no occasion of forbearance. And these must necessarily arise wherever men dwell together in near relations, with their diversities of temperament and of temper, of education and of training, of habits

and experience. It would be a waste of your time to enlarge on this point—the least thoughtful and informed must see on a little reflection that men must be expected to differ widely in opinion, in taste, in preferences, and in prejudices. Is this a calamity to be mourned over? Are we to look forward to a period either in this world or that which is to come, when men will all think and feel and act alike? I think not; and I must in truth say I hope not. A dull uniformity is without beauty, and is sadly lacking in interest. We love variety.

Yet this leads to the requirement of forbearance in matters of opinion, in matters of taste, in matters of habit and action. There will be inadvertencies, and ill-judged speeches, and misunderstandings, and rash actions and a great variety of matters to be reproved, and yet to be condoned—to be blamed, and yet to be borne with, just as is the case in a family. Hence there is need of a persistent forbearing one another in love. Without it there must be a constant rending asunder of ties that ought to be sacred, and a frequent breaking off into parties, which themselves also under the same process of disintegration become like the fall of the Staubach, which, ere it reaches the bottom, is dissolved into mist and spray. But

II.

Are there no limitations in the case, and if so, what are they?

There could be nothing firm or stable if there were no limitations in God's forbearance—nothing holy and true to be fostered by man if his forbearance was to be without limit. We should be in a sorry plight if our world was governed by One whose forbearance was without limit. But it is not so. He suffered long with much tenderness and with use of means to induce repentance, the old world of the ungodly, but the limit was reached, and His mighty flood swept it to destruction. The five cities of the plain were made an example of the same great purpose to maintain righteousness and to punish iniquity. And we are not to forget that the loving Saviour Himself spake of the limit of forbearance and longsuffering, and of the terrible beyond! A government may not forbear in the matter of treason against itself, or of the violation of the laws which it is its function to uphold and vindicate. A father may not forbear when the sanctity of his house is invaded, nor a brother when the safety of a sister is imperilled. A merchant may not forbear when the swindler attempts his injury, nor an artisan when his rightful claims are ignored. A citizen may not forbear when his inalienable civil rights are attacked, nor may those in authority forbear when lawless means and instruments attempt their overthrow. There must be limits within which forbearance is a virtue, and outside of which it were a vice. What are they? The reply must be affected materially by the relations in which we stand. For example, as a citizen I should forbear in respect of opinions and practices, which it would be wrong to hold fellowship with in the Church; so in general society it is proper often to exercise forbearance in matters which would not be allowed in one's family. Then again, you are often in contact with those who are so ultra in their views that you cannot with your more accurate and balanced estimate so forbear as to work with them. They seem not to be aware that a principle is not necessarily a true one because it opposes evil. The opposite of a wrong is not always right, it may be another extreme of wrong. The prohibitions of asceticism are not the true correctives of sensuality, for asceticism is itself an evil. Monks are not the true cure of worldliness, though it looks like its opposite, and celibacy, though the opposite of unchastity, is certainly not its corrective. The *abuse* of a thing is not always to be met by abstinence, self-control is rather its corrective. What are called "peace principles" are not the true preventives of war. One may honour as good self-sacrificing men those who adopt any or all these measures, but we know it does not follow that their principle is true in morals, and we further know that in opposing some evils after this fashion we may generate others as great, or perhaps greater. Thus, although we need not quarrel with the men, we cannot adopt their measures, nor work on their plane, and there is nothing for it but to part company, unless they will forbear.

Now, in the Church, to which state the Apostle refers, there may be great diversities of theological opinion, and it seems to me that forbearance in love is called for within the lines of fundamental verities. We cannot combine with the man whose God is Humanity, who believes in nothing but phenomena, and who comes by his processes of what is called Positivism simply to the worship of Woman, as of course the best moral specimen of humanity. We must have the belief in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ the Saviour, the God man Redeemer and Lord, and in the Holy Spirit the Illuminator and Comforter. We must have a common faith in man's relations to God and in God's relations to Him. We must recognize our sinfulness and state of righteous condemnation, and that we can be saved only by the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. We must together pray and worship, and together seek to please and serve God, eschewing evil. We must together live and toil and suffer in hope of a blessed inheritance beyond—the gift of our Father. We may form diverse estimates of many of these matters in detail. We may hold as most sacred and precious the doctrine of our Lord's atonement, yet have different theories as to its influence in the Divine government. We may fully realize the certainty of a future life, yet understand somewhat differently from each other the glimpses given to us in the Scriptures into that great and profound aye, and in some sense to us, inscrutable mystery. While we together hold the Bible to be the true word of God and that its teachings are clothed with His authority, we may differ in our apprehension of the measure and kind of inspiration of its several parts and may hesitate to define with precision where the human element is prominent and where the Divine.

Again, it seems to me that forbearance is limited by the fundamental line of a credible profession of experimental religion in those who are candidates for membership. The Church stands distinct from the world, and this distinction is founded on the Godliness of the Church. Without this there seems no reason why it should be at all. It does not exist on the ground of opinions, but on that of life—and life at once manifested and invigorated by obedience. Its members are members of Christ; the Church is His body; and though these statements have reference to the invisible Holy Catholic Church, yet the practical exemplification is to be made in these local churches of the saints. On this fundamental point we must agree or we cannot walk together. There may be