

Human and Divine Love—A Contrast.

BY THE REV. A. M. HILL, D. D.

ROMANS 5:7, 8.

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

We have the Apostle Paul setting forth in these verses the greatness and the freeness of the love of God. This he does by pointing out that, whereas, man will hardly voluntarily and deliberately submit himself to death for that which is most worthy of admiration and love, yet God has given his only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, for that which was most unworthy, and merited only his indignation and abhorrence. By so doing God has established beyond all question the reality of his love for us.

In the seventh verse Paul supposes two cases in the relation of man to man, the one so extraordinary that it is hardly conceivable; the other difficult to imagine, but yet possible.

The first case is that of one dying for a righteous man. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die." The righteous or just man is one who does all that law or justice demand of him. Outwardly he is above reproach. Of cold determination; prudent and cautious, marked by that grand selfishness called ambition, the kindly feelings of his fellow men fall upon his heart like sunshine in winter, melting in no degree the frozen surface that it touches. Within his bosom there is no echo of gladness, and there shines forth no sweet feelings. The heart is of stone, rendering the outward man stiff, sturdy, and rigid. There is none of that energy of passion, and that sublimity of strength which love begets in the heart. There is none of that calm, sweet, gentleness of manner; that generous mind in which there is a spring, which, if rightly touched, yields fine tissues. In vain do we search for love, that only cordial which can give a relish even to the dregs of life. In vain do we search for sympathy and congeniality of mind, or for those sacred emotions raised in the soul, which so often shed their soothing influences on the heart. What there is of love in his heart is like a watery gleam of sunshine, streaming from a pale, sickly sky. Incapable of appreciating affection, dull, cheerless, exacting, sullen and harsh, he scans the passions of others, expressing none of his own except those which, he himself wishes to appear. Contemptuous of other men's opinions, and abhorrent of the ordinary littleness of human nature, he resents any thing like disrespect, whilst he is himself devoid of delicacy of sentiment. So we behold him, a brooding, melancholy man, who commands respect, but is not loved. Respect is a gold and feeble principle compared to love. Thus, although we can admire a man whom we respect, yet who would sacrifice himself for such a man? We seldom imitate what we do not love. We seldom sacrifice ourselves for that which is not adored. For there is something in human nature, which recoils from a stiff, outwardly faultless character, more than from a faulty one. What though he be possessed of an immaculate reputation, with a conscious dignity of undisturbed power, yet who would yield up that which is dearest to his heart for these? They lack the warmth of love. Coldness seldom begets heroes. It is when the heart is moved by powerful feelings and awayed by strong emotions; it is when intense affection and overwhelming enthusiasm, master the heart, that man rises to the pinnacle of sacrifice. Justice may call forth the admiration of men. It may command, or demand the respect of men, but sacrifice it seldom inspires. Thus it is that we rarely hear of one dying for a man simply righteous or just, who lacks the essential and animating principle of love.

The second case supposed by the Apostle, is that of one dying for a good man. "Yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." A good or kind man—What poet in all the richness of his imagination has not described such a man? The good man with his gay and cheerful, courteous and kind disposition. Willing to please, and ready to be pleased; robbing himself as it were, in small graces and sweet attentions. Firm in his principles, yet soft in his manners; warm in feeling yet mild and gentle in temper; able to talk yet willing to listen; his mind full of information while his manners are those of one seeking instruction. On all suffering he gazes with the deepest feelings of sympathy. There is a wealth of pity in his nature for the poor and helpless. Every species of pain and suffering wrings his heart. However loathsome may be the sufferings that he endeavors to alleviate, yet he devotes himself soul and body to their amelioration. Such is the goodness of his heart, that nothing inspires him with repugnance. The dignity of his demeanor—the high qualities—of his mind—the independence of his character, and the apparent disinterestedness of his conduct, gain esteem. From his very nature, and disposition he calls forth affection, for he sees not; he calculates not upon the miseries or the pains that may ensue, for the strength and determination and the love of his own heart give a vigorous impulse to all his actions. A man truly noble, truly generous, truly upright and sincere, there is in his heart all that the warmest, truest passion can dictate. Thus as the glories of the firmament are reflected in the placid bosom of some deep, untroubled stream of the valley, so does Divine Truth shine in him with a clear, yet subdued light, while that love which "vaunteth not itself is not easily provoked" is visible in the deportment of its votary, and sheds an indescribable charm over the tone of his life.

Admiration and love for such a man impel, nay, does impel man to make sacrifices. Within the bosom of man may be found those better feelings and nobler emotions, if means can only be found to touch them and make them vibrate. Love will often be stumbling at the

bottom of the human heart with very little apparent power, till something rouses the man and he leaps up armed with more than gigantic power. There is something, exclaimed a philosopher, within this frame work of dust and ashes, besides, and very different from, the bones and muscles; the veins and nerves of which it is composed. There are loves and affections, sympathies and regards, associations and memories, and all the linked sweetness of that strange, harmonious intercourse of spirit with spirit and soul with soul." And so when all the finer chords of men's natures are touched, when the fine and pure essence of sweet and noble affection has soothed, pleased, and softened the firmest hearts, then it is that we hear of sacrifices—of deeds of heroism and generous benevolence. Then it is that men knowing the amount of all they risk, are willing to stake life itself and all life's blessings upon the success of some great and generous endeavor, then it is that the powerful force of love gives them new confidence in their own powers, nerves them to dare all, to struggle against every difficulty, believing that by so doing they will win a purer glory and a nobler name. Yes, the devotion of man in its sublimest manifestations can rise to the height of sacrifice, even to the point of sacrificing oneself on the altar of a cause whose grandeur and holiness have possessed, or for a good man, whose love and sympathetic tenderness have aroused intense affection.

But what are such supreme acts of human devotion compared to God's conduct toward us. They are but as the dust in the balance. Listen to what the eighth verse announces, "God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "God commendeth," that is, establishes beyond question. Mark the great contrast between human and divine love. The relation of man to man, and the affection of the human heart for a human heart, generally confines itself to that which is above it, or its equal. That which the heart of man hates, it cannot truly love; that which it despises it cannot honor, or that which is repulsive and disagreeable, whose practices are to be condemned and reprobated and whose notions and principles are to be abhorred. The heart of man does not generally descend into the dens of iniquity and mingle with the stream of wretched beings that call themselves human, to find that communion and fellowship of which it is in quest. It rather turns to the higher attributes, to innocence and truth, purity and virtue, honor and piety, to that which abhors the bad and loves the good, where streams of congenial thought and feeling can be poured forth to flow on mingling together in sweet communion. Nor does it go out to that which does not reciprocate the affection it breathes in some degree; to that which it feels is a malicious, envious and hateful opponent. That which occupies the place of love in the human heart toward such opponents is the canker-worm of envy—the sharp tooth of hatred—the bitter grinding jaws of disappointment and the locusts of ill-quitteed love. How vastly different is the relation of God to man. God cannot look above him to devote himself, as we may, to a being of more worth than himself. His love turns to that which is beneath him and takes even the character of sacrifice in behalf of that which is altogether unworthy of him. God shows forth the greatness of his love by loving those who are sinners, vile, filthy and corrupted by sin; those who in every sense are enemies, serving under the banner of the Prince of Darkness, while presenting nothing to win the love or admiration of God. Veritable foes, degraded, and besotted with sin, worthy of nothing but God's wrath, his abhorrence and intense hatred and loathing.

But such is the marvellousness, the superiority of Divine Love over human, that it can be extended with the same power and intensity toward the "children of darkness" as it is toward the children of light—to enemies as well as to allies. But consider how this love expresses itself. It finds its expression in sacrifice. The supreme expression of love is the voluntary surrender of a life. This God does by offering his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, that he might be "a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. He has once suffered the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God."

Mariners tell us that the depth of the Pacific Ocean is four thousand, two hundred and fifty-two yards; that the depth of the Atlantic is four thousand and twenty-six yards, and that the depths of the Indian, the Antarctic and the Arctic Oceans, reach beyond one thousand yards. But what mariner on the ocean of life will tell us the depth of the love of God. No, no. We with our short line of love can never take the soundings or fathom the depths of God's infinite love.

Astronomers have been able to measure the distance of the nearest stars. They have discovered a star in the Constellation of the Centaur, whose light has been three years and four months in reaching this earth. They have informed us of another constellation whose light has been one hundred and twenty years in reaching us. Nay more, they have been busy measuring worlds, and have told us how great is the circumference of this world and how great is its diameter. Yes, they have kept on until they have weighed our planet and found its weight to be six sextillion tons. But what spiritual astronomer has ever been able to measure the eternal and boundless love of Jesus Christ? Think of it—"the just suffering for the unjust." No, no. We with our varying and always changing affections cannot ascend to the heights of God's affection for us.

Many wise men have lived. We have read of Thales, Solon, Chiro, Pittacus, Cleobulus, Periander, Aesop, Socrates, Plato, Solomon. But what wise man with all his powers of apprehension and comprehension has ever fully comprehended the love of God? Read the Mohammedan "Koran," the Chinese "Five Kings," the Hindoo "Vedas," and the Persian "Zendavesta," but in no book save the Bible will you discover a record of such marvellous love. Well may the Apostle Paul write "for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." We, with our tottering and ignoble regards, cannot travel the length or the area over which God's regard stretches. We may tell in rapturous tones of the love of God. Our hearts may drink in the diluting draughts of God's intense devotion. New feelings may spring up in our

bosoms. Dreams and hopes and expectations, softer, calmer, and more profound than ever have entered before, may flow in upon our hearts like the stream of some deep, pure river washing away all that is rude and unholy and unworthy in them, yet, who will dare to suppose that he has in any way penetrated to the depths of the great heart of God. Who will dare to say that he can understand in any degree the intensity, the greatness, the freeness and boundlessness of the love which found expression in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. "For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

As is well known the great musician Beethoven was deaf and much more so at some moments than at others. On one occasion when a visitor entered, Beethoven was playing one of his finest compositions which had not at that time been given to the world, and his back being turned toward the door he did not perceive that any one came in. As he went on, all the various appearances of intense delight and emotion, passed over his countenance and at length the tears rolled down his cheeks as he concluded. The visitor then laid his hand upon his arm and made him aware of how great was his admiration of all he had just heard. "Alas, my friend, replied the great harmonist, I have but caught a few notes, but the grandness of the full harmony I can only imagine." And this is our position with respect to the love of God. Our cold, dull and ungrateful hearts only catch a few notes of the "Song of Love" but as to what the fullness of the one grand harmony must be, we can only imagine. The sky, the sea, the insect world upon the wing, and all nature, diversified though it may be unite in a glorious anthem "God is love." But though, the love of God be unfathomable yet men may progress in the knowledge of its greatness and vastness. We have in our bosoms the power to feel a part of that love. Would we have that power increased? Then let us devote ourselves to the attainment of pure and noble hearts, capable of every generous and every ardent feeling. To the attainment of grand and comprehensive minds able to form and to receive every elevated thought and fine idea. Above all, let us devote ourselves and direct our affections to the God who loves us, knowing well that we shall find nothing which can compare to his love, nothing so bright, nothing so sweet, nothing so entrancing, nothing so ennobling. Would that every sinner who has almost shut out of his nature all the exquisite qualities of love, would that he might realize the love of God how great it is. Would that every libertine and every debauchee who has almost destroyed within his bosom the power of comprehending what love is in its purity is, would that he might listen to the sweet melody "Christ died for sinners such as he." Would that those upon whom disappointment has broken, who have learned the bitter lessons that hope has told idle tales, that fortune is of fickle favor, that friendships are too often false, that enjoyment itself is often a vanity, and that all must suffer and grieve and repent in the midst of a world which at first seemed bright and happy. Would that they might partake of the love of God which furnishes a balm for many wounds and surrounds with an atmosphere of hope and joy. Oh that all might render unto God the homage of grateful hearts since "he has commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

"I only know
I cannot go
Beyond his love and care."

Wanted—An Ethical Revival.

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The term "ethical" is usually synonymous with the word, "moral"; but we mean by "ethical revival" something more than a "moral revival," unless by moral is meant a morality which recognizes God as the ground of obligation. Throughout this paper the "ethics" we speak about is "Christian ethics." We use the expression, "ethical revival," meaning by it a larger recognition of the teachings of Jesus in their application to life. Such a revival will always be in order until life has become perfected in the full vision of God in Christ Jesus.

1. At the very start it may be best to inquire into the relationship which exists between the religious and the ethical, as distinct elements in our life.

So far as history goes, these elements have been co-existing factors in human life. Given the religious element, and we may be sure that the moral element, in some sort, has existed with it. Not only have the two elements been co-existing, in the life of man, they have also been co-operative, the one helping the other.

The history of Israel, for example, is a good illustration of the fact which we have just stated. The Old Testament not only records the development of a divine revelation, but it also sets forth the progress of morals. The two elements went on together. The teachers of ancient Israel made no distinction between religious and moral. They taught that man has a spiritual relationship with God which brings him into direct, vital touch with Deity, and Deity into direct, vital touch with him. The religious element is the apprehension of this relationship through faith; the ethical element, the outward expression of this sense of relationship with the Lord by a life of loving service. The Hebrews had no word for "moral," or "ethical"; they did have, however, the word "righteousness," and that word sums up their idea of the moral requirements of Deity for their lives.

We notice, further, that in the several revivals mentioned in the Old Testament there was an advance in both religion and ethics; that is, there was a larger vision of God and a more strenuous attempt to realize the vision