

Jesus, was taught by Plato with as much clearness and emphasis as by the reformer of Nazareth. "Love," says the great teacher of the Academy, "is peace and goodwill among men, calm upon the waters, repose and stillness in the storm, and balm of sleep in sadness."

"Platonic love" is a phrase with which all are familiar. But this sentiment among the ancients was not confined to philosophers or poets. It is as old as human society, and has been exhibited wherever mothers have caressed their children, or friends have imperilled their lives in aiding one another; wherever patriots have died for country or philanthropists for the good of the race.

It is a great mistake to suppose, as many Christians believe, that Jesus was the first to proclaim what is known as the "Golden Rule." Scholars have frequently pointed out that the sentiment was distinctly expressed, in almost the very words ascribed to Jesus, by Confucius in China, Isocrates in Greece, and Hillel in Judea.

The disposition to act towards our fellows kindly and justly, as we would have them act towards us, is found even among savages, although their ideas of justice may not be as correct or as well-defined as those prevalent among more enlightened peoples. In Egypt and India, in Greece and Rome, all the essential principles of morality were understood as they are to-day; and the virtues of truthfulness and honesty, friendship and love were esteemed as highly as they are among us.

The doctrine of "the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man," which the clergy are still in the habit of claiming as a distinctively Christian doctrine, was taught by philosophers and poets, and understood to some extent by the people, long before the time of Jesus.

"One who knows himself," says Cicero, "will feel that he is a citizen of the whole world, holding all united by nature to be his own relatives" (*De Leg.* i. 22, 23). Numerous passages of a similar character could be given from the same author. The Stoics taught the same doctrine clearly and unequivocally. There is hardly an author of the Augustan age from whose works extracts cannot be gleaned inculcating the equality and the brotherhood of man. We can go much farther back, and find the doctrine taught quite as plainly. Aratus, a poet of Celicia, who flourished 279 B.C., says:

"Jove's presence fills all space, upholds this ball;
All need his aid; his power sustains us all,
For we his offspring are."—(*"Phenomena,"* bk. v., p. 5.)

Cleanthes, a Stoic philosopher and poet, a pupil of Zeno and who lived from 330 to 240 B.C., expresses the same sentiment in his famous "Hymn to Jupiter," as follows:

"Great and divine Father, whose names are many,
But who art one and the same unchangeable and almighty power;
O thou supreme author of nature,
That govern'st by a single unerring law;