

Love to God.

BY REV. JAMES STALKER, D. D.

EVEN so wise a representative of the ancient world as Aristotle says, "There is no such thing as love to God; it is absurd to speak of anything of the kind, for God is an unknowable being." It is impossible to conceive words which could bring out more clearly the contrast between the circle of thought within which the ancient world moved, and that wherein those move who have obtained their notions of the universe from the Bible. Even in the Old Testament, God is a being who loves, intensely: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." "I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving-kindness and in mercies; I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." In the New Testament the revelation of the love of God is carried much further, till it culminates in the incomparable saying, "God is love."

I was much struck by the testimony of some one as to his own experience: "All that I ever heard—and I heard much—about the love of God, was to me sound and smoke, until I realized that the Son of God had given up his life on the cross to redeem me from my sins." And there is no doubt that this is the way in which most people begin to love God, if they love him with reality and intensity. It is not only that the love of the Father is supremely and finally revealed in the gift of His Son, but in Christ Himself the Divine love shines forth in the most affecting and attractive of all forms; it shines out all along the course of His life with increasing brightness, and it blazes from His cross.

There can be no doubt that, ever since He was crucified on Calvary, Jesus Christ has commanded the love of tens of thousands in every generation, and that the strength of Christianity at any time is accurately measured by the number of those who love Him, and the intensity with which they do so. If the question be asked, "What is a Christian?" many answers could doubtless be given; but is any of them more to the point than this: "A Christian is one who loves Christ?"

Sometimes this love dawns upon the heart with sudden rapture, similar to that which, in the relations of human beings, often accompanies what is called falling in love. But this sublime happiness is not vouchsafed to all. Many who undoubtedly love Him have no recollection when they commenced to do so. The essential question is not, however, how love began, but whether it is growing. And love to Christ grows exactly by the same means as love to any one else—by being constantly in His company, by speaking often to Him, by gazing on the beauty of His character.

Some are jealous of expressions of love to God, because they suspect that these may be substituted for acts of love to man. And it cannot be denied that zeal for God has sometimes been associated with cruelty and hard-heartedness towards man, as, for example, in the burning of

heretics and the torture of witches. But such cases are exceptional and unnatural. The normal effect of love to God is love to man. Professor Drummond has drawn attention to the fact that the correct translation of a verse quoted already is not "We love Him because He first loved us," but "We love because He first loved us." The love of God realized leads to all kinds of love, because it breaks down the natural selfishness of the heart, which is the great obstacle to every kind of tender feeling towards others. Is it not a contradiction in terms to speak of loving Christ when we do not love our fellowmen? If the word of Jesus has any weight with us, if His example in any degree influences our conduct, if His Spirit has ever faintly entered our heart, then we cannot be loveless to our fellow-creatures.

In spite of the satire so frequently poured from the pulpit and through the Press on the behavior of Christians to one another, the fact is the feeling of true Christians for one another is very deep and tender. Let them meet anywhere—even in the ends of the earth—and recognize one another as such, and their hearts leap together at once, and there is nothing they will not do for one another. If they hesitate to give such recognition, it is because they are not sure of their ground; but let them be sure, and kindness follows immediately. I venture even to say that the average behavior of Christians to those whom they cannot identify as real Christians proves that the love of God in their hearts has improved their feelings and their conduct. It is, indeed, impossible to feel for such the same love as for those who are brethren in the Lord. But all men are potential Christians; they are capable of being saved and becoming heirs of immortality; and this gives them all a claim on our love—not only on our evangelistic and proselytizing zeal, but on our humanity and kindness. On this subject let me quote a few words from the same author with whom I commenced this lecture. Addressing a band of missionaries, Professor Drummond once said: "You can take nothing greater to the heathen world than the impress and reflection of the love of God upon your own character. This is the universal language. It will take you years to speak in Chinese or in the dialects of India. But, from the day you land that language of love, understood by all, will be pouring forth its unconscious eloquence. Take into your new sphere of labor, where you also mean to lay down your life, that simple charm, and your life work must succeed. You can take nothing greater; you can take nothing less. You may take every accomplishment, you may be braced for every sacrifice, but, if you give your body to be burned, and have not love, it will profit you and the cause of Christ nothing."

Grateful Mention.

One evening recently a large number of this congregation of the Valley church assembled in the parsonage, and made us a donation of \$45. For this expression of good will we are thankful. May God's blessing rest upon the people.

MILTON ADDISON, Surrey, N. B.

Notice.

The next session of the Queens Co. Quarterly Meeting will be held at the head of Cumberland Bay opening Friday, March 23rd at 7 p. m. Churches are urged to send full delegations.

The Substitutional View of the Atonement.

PART II.

We can only conceive of three motives for punishment: one for disciplinary and corrective ends; another to uphold the integrity of law; the other to gratify a tyrannical and unfeeling nature. The latter we cannot ascribe to God. But if we regard His throne as the centre of righteous administration in the moral universe, we must recognize the necessity of satisfaction for the infraction of His law, which is impossible on the part of the transgressor, because he has become a rebel. And this is the character of man; he has by sin become a rebel against God, and has joined allegiance to another sovereign; and is his subject and servant; and that sovereign is sin, which reigns unto death. "Know ye not to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey? his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness." Sin hath reigned unto death." And here we see the man-ward side of the real necessity for a substitutionary sacrifice to take away his sin, for he is unable to provide it for himself. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, justifying us freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Here we have all that is true in the governmental design of the Atonement: "The grace of God bringing salvation to the lost race in harmony with his righteousness and truth;" while the substitutionary fact shines most conspicuously. For on the dark groundwork of man's sinfulness and helplessness there is the raying forth in glowing colors, the sovereign love of God in the gift of his dear son to be the sacrificial sin bearer of mankind. The necessity and the fact of a substitutionary sacrifice being made for the salvation of men, is the germinal seed thought of all scripture teaching. Eliminate from the Bible this life germ and you have a mass of dead formalism. Jesus said to Pilate, "To this end have I been born, and to this end have I come into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth," and for this cause," He also said, "came I unto this hour;" and surely he meant the tragic hour of Calvary. In that eventful hour he bore objective witness to the symbolic truth contained in all the substitutionary sacrifices of the past ages, in that he there and then put an end to the sacrifices for sin, at the end of the sacrificial age, by the sacrifice of Himself. On the Cross "He bowed His head and cried: 'It is finished.'" "So there remains no more sacrifice for sin"; no more need of it since that triumphant exclamation. There, and then, he gave ample witness to man's guilt and condemnation; and also to the infinite love and mercy of God. Man's moral and spiritual necessities required the substituted merit of a substituted sacrifice, and only in this position can we account for Jesus being nailed to the cross. The full redemption of our entire manhood, body, soul and spirit, was involved in the stupendous work he came to accomplish; and it required the entire sacrifice of his complete humanity, body and soul, to perfect the undertaking. His mental suffering in Gethsemane, though intense as the hell of the damned, were not enough to meet man's direful condition. He must cover the whole situation if he would be an all-sufficient Saviour. He must suffer in the flesh as a malefactor, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, even the devil; and deliver those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." If he had not died as a criminal, his death would not have been a sufficient exhibition of man's desert; nor of the full satisfaction he came to render to law and justice on man's behalf. For this purpose "He was made" in the scale of being and nature"