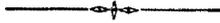


be the simplest solution to many a vexing problem, such as the "religious question": it would be the death-warrant to infidelity, bridge-madness, harlotry, and vice; it would be the shortest way for the bringing in of the kingdom of Christ.

A. B. G. LILLINGSTON.



### "GOD IS LOVE" AND ITS IMPLICATION.

IT is astonishing how this precious text is misunderstood and even perverted by many who quote it. This was very apparent in the correspondence which lately took place in the *Daily Telegraph* on the question, "Do We Believe?" Many of the sceptical writers quoted it with a view of showing that the God who is so described in the Bible could not possibly be so cruel (so they put it) as to punish sinners in the way that other Scriptures affirm that He will, and therefore that those latter texts cannot be inspired, and must be rejected. They do not seem to see their inconsistency in quoting this one text as authoritative and truthful, while they regard other texts from the same book, and indeed other passages from the same speaker or writer, as having no authority.

But the truth is that they really do not understand what love is and what it implies, or they surely would see that there is no inconsistency, still less any contradiction, between such passages and those that they contrast with them. Such writers evidently take a merely sentimental view of love. They think of the God who is so described as they do of a very easy, amiable, Eli-like character, who is very lenient with sin and sinners, who is always disposed to overlook their faults, and who could not find it in His heart to punish them, still less to consign them to what those Scriptures plainly describe as "the damnation of hell."

With regard to Eli, if he had loved Israelitish society and its well-being, he would not have said to his sons, "Nay, my sons, it is no good thing that I hear," but he would have said, "It is an awfully wicked thing that I hear—a thing that I hate, and unless you cease at once from such ways and repent of them, I must visit you with my hot displeasure."

Now, I want to try and show that the error in question arises from a misconception of what love is, and what the highest and truest of human love is. These writers do not see that love necessarily implies hate. There cannot be true love, even in man, without hatred (excluding, of course, every

idea of malice), without an intense hatred of all that is opposed to it, and which would be of harm to the object or the objects loved. I may make this clear by an illustration. It is related of that noble soul the late Rev. F. W. Robertson, of Brighton, that one day as he was walking with a friend he saw a gentleman who was noted for his profligacy pursuing a young, innocent girl with evident evil design, and Robertson passionately stamped with his foot as he pointed him out to his friend, and exclaimed, “ Thank God, there is a hell ! ”

Now, that was simply the fiery indignation of love—of love for virtue, purity, and goodness, and therefore of hate for vice, debauchery, and brutality. He would have rejoiced at the very unlikely conversion of that wretched man, but seeing him bent on the ruin of virtue, a sense of holy justice made his observer rejoice that such iniquity could not go unpunished. The Rev. Silvester Horne has well said : “ Somebody—who was it?—said, ‘ I like a good hater. ’ So do I. The Christian is a good hater. The Christian is a man with tremendous powers of moral indignation. The good hater is the good lover. It is the power of the heart turned against evil with good hate, and turned towards righteousness with a magnificent love.”

I might illustrate the matter still more largely from the Word of God itself. There is another text parallel to “ God is Love,” and that is “ God is Light.” Now, what is light ? It does not consist of one simple ray of white, but it is a compound element. Analyze it, or separate it into its component parts by a prism, and we find it to consist of various colours—red, purple, orange, green, and others. So with the attribute of love. It has in it not only the simple, tender ray of amiability, but also the darker rays of justice and holiness and truth.

Indeed, God Himself has in many Scriptures thus analyzed His love. Look at His own revelation of His character in Exod. xxxiv. 5-8 : “ And the Lord descended in a cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty [who cleave to their guilt] ; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation.” With what a variety of terms does He Himself thus emphasize His love, but how solemnly does He here show by the latter words, not only that the punishment of unforsaken sin is not inconsistent with all that tender love, but that it is *because* He is this loving and gracious being that He must be just in

avenging the breach of His holy laws which tend to the virtue and happiness of all worlds.

It must be remembered, too, that this revelation of His character is taken from the Pentateuch, and is quite in harmony with that that is given of it in the New Testament. The God of the New Testament, whose character is summed up in the words "God is love" is the same God that He was in the Old Testament. God is of course an unchangeable being. He says of Himself, I am the Lord, I change not." He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Yet in that very Pentateuch we see in the history of the Flood and in that of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and indeed in all Old Testament history—that is in the form of His actual dealings with men—one continuous illustration of the truth that it is just because He is this God of love that He could and would and ever did punish and sweep away with the besom of destruction individuals and families and nations that tended to corrupt themselves and others, and so to destroy the happiness of the whole family of man.

All inspired history thus tends to show that love is a shield the obverse side of which is hate. Be on the one side of it, and love will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father"; but be on the other side, and even love "will say to those on the left hand, Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels!" This is the necessary result of His very goodness; as a very spiritual preacher has thus expressed it: "Though each created being might make spiritual progress for ages and ages, He, the only One, would remain infinitely removed from any of His creatures, intense in goodness, *goodness manifested by its repulsion to evil*, as well as its delight in truth, virtue, and benevolence."<sup>1</sup> As Mr. Spurgeon truly says: "None are more terrible in justice than those who are tender in mercy. Bring to me the gentlest spirit that ever lived, and begin to tell the tale of the Bulgarian massacres, and I will warrant you that *in proportion to the tenderness will be the indignation*. They who have no heart cannot display real indignation; but where there beats a true heart of love there must be righteous wrath against that which is unloving, holy anger against that which is unjust and untrue."

Note, again, a few other passages of Scripture: "I, the Lord, hate evil." Nor evil only in the abstract, but the persons of those who cherish it, for "He hateth *all the workers of iniquity*." "The Lord abhorreth both the bloody and deceitful man." "The Lord is a man of war." "The Lord

<sup>1</sup> "The Intensity of the Divine Nature," by the Rev. H. W. Burrows.

cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." "Behold the goodness and severity of God"—severity not incompatible with goodness, but the very outcome of it; for He could not be a good God, or a God of love, if He were not severe against the rebels who would, if left unpunished, tend to mar all the happiness as well as the goodness of His whole creation. Even an earthly Justice of the Peace could not be a good or a kind man if he forgave the burglar or the murderer or the rebel that was found guilty before him. If he did, he would have no love for society or the public weal. "God is Love," and for that very reason He must be just, and "root out of His kingdom them that offend and them that do iniquity."

It is strikingly confirmatory of this view, and a very remarkable fact in itself, that that Apostle who is emphatically the Apostle of love is really the most intolerant (if we may so say) of evil and error of all the Apostles—I mean, of course, St. John. It is in his Gospel that the Lord's most loving words are recorded. And it is in his Epistles that there is quite a tautology of love, and of the importance of love in Christian character. Yet, strange to say, none of the inspired Apostles use stronger language of wrath against sin and wilful sinners than he. Take these passages in illustration: "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments is a liar." "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" "He that committeth sin is of the devil." "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness (or the wicked one)." "Many deceivers are entered into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an Antichrist." "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed. For he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds." "If I come, I will remember his (Diotrephes') deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words," etc.

"How illiberal! What a want of charity!" the sceptic would say. Yet the fact remains that it is emphatically the Apostle of love who so writes, proving again that love must hate error as well as sin. Nor, forgiving as God Himself is, can He ever forgive sin unless it is confessed and repented of, for it is St. John who says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins"—to forgive otherwise would be to encourage sin, and to encourage sin would be to mar the happiness of the whole creation.

St. Paul, again, who penned the longest and most elaborate, as well as the most tender and beautiful exposition of love in

1 Cor. xiii. was the same Apostle who wrote such words as these: "Abhor that which is evil." "I have written unto you not to keep company if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat. Put away from yourselves that wicked person." "Mark them that cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them." "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us."

Does any one say, "In such passages the extoller of charity—of love—was forgetting love?" Rather was it a necessary outcome of his charity, for his charity had to consider the purity and welfare of the Christian society, as well as the offender. And he was, after all, in so writing inspired by the very teaching and example of the Lord Jesus Himself, who said to His disciples, "Whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them."

And this leads me to say that the most striking illustration of all is to be found in the Lord Jesus Himself. For He was the Incarnation of this God of Love—the very personification of it. And "the love of Christ passeth knowledge." How wondrously that surpassing love showed itself in all that He was, in all that He did, and in all that He suffered; ever going about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; ever speaking the most loving words and doing the most loving deeds, and at last, for "the great love wherewith He loved us," laying down His life for us on the cross. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," "but God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

But *because* of this very love He could hate, and hate, too, with a most vehement flame. Witness how it flashed out against all those who, rejecting Him and His Gospel, clung persistently, and in spite of light and knowledge, to their wickedness and errors: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. . . . Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

Will the reader, in the light of our subject, read the whole

outflash of His righteous ire in Matt. xxiii.? Read, too, the woes that He denounced against the cities in which most of His wonderful works were done—against Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (Matt. xi. 16-25). And how constantly this hate of love flashes out in many of His parables! And even in that very Sermon on the Mount which sceptics point to as an embodiment of that religion of love and benevolence which they taunt the Christian Church as not living up to, even in that He says, "Except your righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members shall perish, and not that thy whole body shall be cast into hell." "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity." And let those who flatter themselves that because God is Love He will overlook their sins and errors, and that a place of future punishment is only the figment of theologians, read the whole of His wonderful revelation of the future which He Himself gives (Matt. xxiv., xxv.), and then they will see how love can hate. And it should make all sinners and followers of error tremble and fear before Him, and incline them to seek that love that can and will forgive them *if* they repent and turn to Him, but who assuredly, if they will not, will consume them in the holy flame of His righteous wrath, for "Our God"—this God of love—because He is love—"is a consuming fire."

I do not turn aside to consider whether this fire is to be everlastingly penal or dispensationally corrective, or whether it is to result in an ultimate destruction of being; but no one, save those who reject the revelation of the future of all unbelievers and impenitent sinners given us in the Scriptures, or who impiously explain away its plain language, can for a moment doubt that there is a hell for them, and that condign and awful punishment awaits them.

Finally, let no reader imagine that what I have written is intended to diminish aught from the infinite love of God. "Love so amazing, so Divine," is far beyond any human conception of what love is. No sinner, however great, need despair that it is equal to his full forgiveness and regeneration if he repent and turn to it in prayer. But what I have tried

to show is, that that love is bound by this *if*. "If we confess our sins," seek and pray for pardon, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But if a man "will *not* turn, He will whet His sword: He hath bent His bow and made it ready." Even Christian forgiveness, according to Christ's own teaching, is to depend upon this *if*. "If he shall neglect to hear them" (the witnesses), "tell it unto the Church; but *if* he neglect to hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican." And when Peter asked Him, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him till seven times?" was he to forgive irrespective of any repentance on the part of the offender? Not so; and this condition is strangely overlooked by most readers: "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and *if he repent*, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times a day, *turn again to thee, saying, I repent*, thou shalt forgive him"; but not if he does not say this.

My great object, then, in writing this paper has been to destroy that illusion, fostered, alas! by "advanced," but unscriptural, preachers in these days, that leads deluded souls to think that, whatever their sin or worldliness may be, a God of love cannot hate it or them, and will never severely punish them. This sentimental view of this solemn matter arises from a totally inadequate view of the evil of sin. People do not realize what an awful thing sin is. The novels of the day, and, alas! even some of the pulpits, where they are not silent upon it, represent it as little more than a weakness, which is very excusable, and may easily be pardoned; and the consequence is, what Dr. Dale expressed to his friend: "Berry, nobody *fears* God nowadays." There is, therefore, no felt need of atonement; and the doctrine that Christ's sufferings and death were needful in order to that atonement is passed over or rejected. God's love is sentimentally dwelt upon, but not in the way that Scripture exhibits that love, as giving His Son as a ransom, as delivering Him up for us all, as bruising Him for our iniquities, but as a kind of love that will amiably excuse the evil thing. And thus sinners are led to think lightly of it, too, and to have little or no fear of being punished for it, or to dread any hell hereafter. They repose in a love that is in accord with their own conceptions, but which is utterly opposed to its scriptural exhibition. This God of love, however, tells them in His own revelation of His character that in this "refuge of lies" they will be deceived, for "God cannot deny Himself"; and He tells them most plainly that by a moral necessity He must and He will punish unrepented sin. But *why* does He so warn them?

Because "He willeth not the death of a sinner, but that all should come to repentance"; because, in one word, "God is Love."

R. GLOVER.

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PROFESSOR HARNACK ON FOREIGN MISSIONS.

PROFESSOR ADOLF HARNACK is probably the most influential of living theological writers. In Germany he holds a unique position, and his theories and investigations have profoundly modified the ideas of many English thinkers. In his "Reden und Aufsätze," lately published, he discusses many matters of present-day interest, and the results he expounds are by no means acceptable to those who hold the traditional creed of Christendom. Especially is this evident in his articles on the Apostles' Creed, for he appears to hold a special brief against the article, "Born of the Virgin Mary," and endeavours to prove that this was not the belief of the Apostolic Church, but an accretion of later date. His arguments have been adopted by those in this country who discredit this fundamental fact of Christian history, and the source of much of the erroneous thought of those who reject the supernatural conception of our Lord is to be found in the vigorous writings of the German Professor. Quite unexpectedly, the second volume of the "Reden und Aufsätze" contains a most eloquent, impassioned plea for Evangelical missions, addressed in 1900 to the General Assembly of the Evangelical Protestant Missionary Union of Germany. Here he appears as an enthusiastic advocate of Christian missions, and the argument of the man who is universally acknowledged to have a unique first-hand acquaintance with the development of the Christian Church must possess great interest for the supporters of foreign missions in this country.

He spoke when European soldiers were marching in China, where formerly only merchants and missionaries worked. A new epoch in the world's history had begun, for it was a token that Asia would come under European control. The rise of Japan was not within the outlook of the speaker; but this does not interfere with the validity of his argument, which concerns itself, in the first place, with the duty and the aim of Evangelical missions. The Gospel must be preached to all nations, not because our Lord and the Apostles gave command or because Christianity is better than other religions, but from the conviction that Christianity is not a