

Harnack on 1 Corinthians xiii.

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THE report of the proceedings (vol. vii., 1911) of the Royal Academy of Science (Prussia) contains an erudite paper¹ by Dr. Adolf Harnack on 'St. Paul's Hymn in Praise of Love.' It is a fresh and suggestive study of 1 Co 13, with special reference to its significance for the student of the history of religions. Its value is greatly increased by numerous elaborate and luminous notes. With the addition of these notes, the original essay has become a pamphlet of 32 quarto pages.²

The theme of the hymn is found in 1 Co 8^{1f.}: 'Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth. . . . If any man loveth God, the same is known of him.' After digressions on other subjects, the Apostle returns to this theme as he is discoursing on spiritual gifts. Alike in its subject-matter and in its style, the hymn differs from the chapters between which it is found. To discover the connexion of thought, it is necessary to ascertain the meaning of 12^{31.}: 'But desire earnestly the greater gifts. And a still more excellent way shew I unto you.' What are we to understand by 'the greater gifts'? And how can the contents of the hymn be described as 'a way'?

By 'the greater gifts' Harnack understands the virtues which in Gal 5²² St. Paul calls 'the fruit of the Spirit.' It is true that, in the narrower sense of the word, they are not 'gifts' (*χαρίσματα*); but of set purpose the Apostle writes paradoxically. Properly speaking, the 'gifts' mentioned in 12⁴⁻¹¹ are extraordinary (*Zugaben*), and the Corinthians are reminded that the greater gifts are those virtues which are essential elements in the Christian character. Harnack is aware that the majority of expositors understand by 'the greater gifts' those which are more profitable for edifying; but he is confident that the comparison is with all the gifts enumerated not only in 12^{29f.}, but also in 12^{4ff.}: 'It is quite arbitrary to make any limitation here.'

¹ *Das hohe Lied des Apostels Paulus von der Liebe (1 Kor. 13) und seine religionsgeschichtliche Bedeutung.* Von Adolf Harnack. Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Sonderabdruck. Berlin: Georg Reimer.

² This paper, it should be said, is not printed in the two substantial volumes of Essays by Dr. Harnack, recently published under the title *Aus Wissenschaft und Leben*.

Harnack agrees with Godet and Meyer in preferring *κρείττονα*, 'better,' to *μείζονα*, 'greater.' It is probable, he thinks, that *κρείττονα* was the original reading in 12^{31.}, but that the text of this verse was assimilated to 13¹³ and 14⁵, where *μείζονα* is rightly used in comparing gifts which belong to the same category. *μείζονα* is 'an almost exclusively Alexandrine reading.'

When in v.^{81b} St. Paul says, 'And besides a super-excellent way shew I unto you,' Harnack holds that 'way' must be interpreted quite literally, and not metaphorically, as, e.g., 'doctrine.' The way in which St. Paul would have the Corinthians run zealously is 'love.' The negative and positive virtues enumerated in 13⁴⁻⁷ are 'the better gifts,' and 'because love is their root, love is the means, as it is also the way, to their attainment.' In the Apostle's estimation, love is at once the best of the better gifts, and the way which leads to all the rest.

The 'Hymn' is divided into three parts, consisting respectively of vv.^{1-3.} 4-7. 8-13. A detailed commentary is not attempted, but difficulties of interpretation are discussed at length. Occasionally, however, a welcome flashlight illumines a familiar passage, as when attention is called to the rhetorical effect of the repetition of the emphatic word 'all' in v.^{2.}, and to the contrast between what a man *has* and what he *is* in the climax of the same verse. 'It could not read, "I *have* nothing," for such a man has the most extraordinary gifts; but in the midst of these riches of knowledge *he is himself nothing*, that is to say, he is even poorer than poor.'

The longest investigation (seven pages) in the essay is devoted to an attempt to determine the true reading in v.^{8b}. Did St. Paul write 'if I give my body *to be burned*' (*καυθήσομαι*), or 'if I give my body *that I may glory*' (*καυχήσομαι*)? On grounds of textual criticism alone, Harnack thinks that the question cannot be decisively answered. Indeed, the balance would incline towards *καυθήσομαι*, were it not that Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and Clement of Rome may be quoted in favour of *καυχήσομαι*. The scales are even, so far as external evidence is concerned. It remains to consider the internal evidence.

In favour of *καυθήσομαι*, commentators have urged that the supposition of a voluntary fiery death is especially appropriate when it is desired to cite an extreme example of self-sacrifice (cf. Dn 3²⁸); that the reading is too difficult to have its origin in an emendation of the text; that, on the other hand, the change to *καυχῆσομαι* is easily explicable, inasmuch as St. Paul frequently used the word; and that this reading is unsuitable to the context, and destroys the sense of the verse. In reply, Harnack says that the difficult reading is *καυθήσομαι*, as is proved by the varieties of interpretation: martyrdom by fire is not the sacrificing of self for others; many suggestions are improbable, as, e.g., fiery torture endured rather than make a confession to the disadvantage of others, or the branding of slaves; expositions which regard the phrase as having no special application fail to account for its presence; moreover, this general sense is more forcefully given without what ought to be the emphatic word: 'and if I give my body.' (For the absolute use of *παραδιδόναι*, cf. Ro 4²⁵, and Plut. *Demet.* 49 f.) If Dn 3²⁸ is quoted, it must be remembered that a passage so well known might account for *καυθήσομαι* as a copyist's error, and certainly this change was more likely to be made than the reverse alteration after the era of martyrdom had begun. The awkwardness of the expression is hidden in the English translation, but it deserves consideration: 'The Greek language has no need to use such a circumlocution as "if I give my body so that I may be burned."'

It remains to meet the objection that the reading *καυχῆσομαι* destroys the sense of the verse. Harnack confesses that this would be the case if 'glorying' meant 'empty boasting,' but the word has a far nobler significance. He complains that sufficient attention has not been paid to St. Paul's frequent assertion that the Christian may have a 'glorying' (*καύχημα*), which is the exact opposite of 'vainglory' (*κενοδοξία*). A word which is used fifty-five times by St. Paul must be interpreted 'psychologically,' that is to say, his use of it will reflect the characteristics of his mind. If he can write, 'We glory in our tribulations' (Ro 5²), why can he not say, 'We glory in giving our body'? The Apostle knew that there is a glorying which is 'not good' (1 Co 5⁸), but he also desired ground for glorying in the day of Christ (Ph 2¹⁶). There is a glorying which is seemly to the Christian, and it may furnish a worthy motive for self-sacrificing deeds. But even

the self-sacrifice contemplated will be counted 'nothing' without love. Love is essential to any glorying in the day of God.

If *καυχᾶσθαι* is the original reading, the change is accounted for by the fact that writers like Ignatius and Hermas do not use the word in a good sense. [Clement of Rome is an exception (*Ep. Cor.* xxxiv. 5), but Pauline influence is traceable in his Epistle (cf. 2 Co 7⁴).] As signifying 'boasting,' it would be a stumbling-block; the change, involving only a single letter, is the more easily explicable, because some of the early Fathers understood 'if I give my body' to refer to martyrdom, whereas St. Paul has in view such cases as are mentioned by Clement of Rome (*Ep. Cor.* lv.): 'Many kings and rulers . . . have delivered themselves over to death, that they might rescue their fellow-citizens through their own blood.' Finally, to prove that the thought involved in his exposition is apostolic, Harnack pertinently quotes 1 Jn 4¹⁷: 'Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment' (2 Co 7⁴ shows that 'boldness' and 'glorying' are parallel ideas).

In v. 7 Harnack prefers 'covereth' to 'beareth' as the rendering (cf. RVm) of *στέγει*. The translation 'beareth' (R.V.) too closely approximates to the meaning of *υπομένει* (R.V. 'endureth') in the same verse. Clement of Rome quotes 1 P 4⁸, 'love covereth (*καλύπτει*) a multitude of sins' (*Ep. Cor.* xlix.) before sentences taken from this chapter. The climax of part two (vv. 4-7) is found in the words, 'love rejoiceth in the truth,' for Harnack holds that in *συγχαίρει* (R.V. 'rejoiceth with') the *σύν* is strengthening, the compound form of the verb being used for the sake of the rhythm. In support of this rendering he quotes 1 Co 5⁸, Ro 2⁸, 2 Th 2¹², Clem. Rom. *Ep. Cor.* xxxv. 5, Clem. Alex. (*Quis dives*, xxxviii.).

Much of the charm of Harnack's exposition lies in the aptness of his illustrative quotations. In Nu 12⁸, 'With him (Moses) I will speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, not in dark speeches,' he finds the clue to the interpretation of St. Paul's words: 'Now we see in a mirror, in a riddle; but then face to face' (v. 12). Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* i. 19, 94) regards the 'mirror' as referring to the knowledge of God derived from self-knowledge and from knowledge of our brethren. But Harnack sees no reason for such limitation. 'Certainly Paul is thinking also of the mirroring (*Spiegelung*)

of God in nature and in history.' Attention is also called to the different use of the figure in the newly discovered *Odes of Solomon* (13): 'Behold, the Lord is our mirror: open the eyes and see them in Him: and learn the manner of your face.' Dr. Rendel Harris also notes that in the Ode 'the thought is not as high as in Corinthians, where holiness is found by the Vision of God rather than by the scrutiny of ourselves.'

Passing, in the latter half of his paper, to the contents of the chapter as a whole, Harnack comments suggestively on its style. In form it is the most sublime of all St. Paul's writings. 'Poetry, in the strict sense of the word, the Hymn is not, but it is oratory (*Rede*); therefore to describe it as a hymn is not quite correct.' Its rhythm and its poetic form, as well as its literary grace, are due to its inspiring thought and its intense emotion. The Hymn consists of three parts and a closing verse: the necessity of love (vv. 1-3); the nature and effects of love (vv. 4-7); the perpetuity of love (vv. 8-12). The æsthetic attractiveness of the Hymn is ascribed to the exquisite choice of words, the combined strength and simplicity of the style, and the effective use of antithesis and repetition. With the exception of the first verse, no use is made of 'descriptive and picturesque adjectives.' The emphasis is invariably on the verb, so that, paradoxical as it may sound, the Hymn is as remarkable for its animation and movement as for its statuesque grace ('*so erhält der Lobgesang die lebhafteste innere Bewegung neben einer lapidaren Monumentalität*').

The stylistic differences of the three parts are admirably brought out: as, e.g., the parallel construction of vv. 1-3, the ascensive use in each verse of the clause 'but have not love,' and the climactic effect of the brevity of the close of vv. 2-3—two words in the Greek—'I am nothing' and 'I am profited nothing.' Harnack's retention of the 'I,' which is the subject throughout this part, brings out what its dominance signifies, the incontrovertibility of the Apostle's assertions. In part two the solemn threefold use of 'love' in v. 4—(note the chiasmus)—introduces three of its main attributes, but in the following verses the heart of the Apostle is too full to allow of the repeated utterance of the word; eight negative sentences introduced by *οὐ* are followed by four positive statements introduced by *πάντα*. 'The style becomes increasingly impetuous, the words

appear to tumble over each other; but it is merely in appearance—each word stands firmly in its place. The ecstasy is an ecstasy *ἐν νοῦ*.' In part three the tone changes. Three chiselled words (*lapidaren Worten*)—'love never faileth'—introduce the closing theme. But immediately the writer's inward emotion is reflected in the two-fold interchange of plural and singular (plural in vv. 9, 12^a, singular in vv. 11, 12^b). The 'I' is typical, not individual, but the change is impressive. Note is also taken of the rhetorical effect of the five times repeated *νῆπιος* in v. 11, of the contrasts (*ἀπρι* and *τόρε*) and antithesis in v. 12, also of the correspondence of the three tenses in v. 12 to the preceding antithesis. In the closing verse, by 'a genial diversion,' the word 'abideth' is used instead of 'never faileth,' and the climax is reached in the statement of which 'love' is the final and emphatic word: 'the greatest of these is love.'

For the student of the history of religions the interest of the chapter lies, according to Harnack, not in discussions raised by some modern scholars concerning 'tongues of angels' and a clanging cymbal,' but in discovering the relation to Greek thought of St. Paul's teaching in regard to love and knowledge. In some respects it is manifest that Paul, so far from being the disciple of Plato, differs essentially from Greek philosophers. 'They blend knowledge and love (*amor intellectualis*). Paul separates them; they recognize, indeed, a gradually increasing knowledge, but qualitatively all knowledge is identical, Paul denies this; according to them our present knowledge, notwithstanding its imperfection, is the best thing in the world, Paul is far removed from this faith.' In these and in some other respects 'Paul is a Jew, and desires to know nothing of the wisdom of the Greeks.'

But St. Paul's depreciatory estimate of knowledge refers to present conditions, or to knowledge 'in part.' Of perfect knowledge his judgment is very different. In this particular it may still be asked: Does not his teaching resemble Plato's? According to the Apostle, 'the best thing in the world, the best thing in this temporal state, is love; but the absolute best, for which his soul longs, is perfect knowledge, knowledge "face to face," knowledge in which "I shall know, even as also I have been known."' To this knowledge the Apostle's thought turns in this chapter as he hymns the praise of love, and in another passage

in this Epistle (8⁸) he takes a step in advance and says: 'If any man loveth God, the same is known of him.'

The result of Harnack's inquiry is that he finds in 1 Co 13, confirmation of his view, that only those Christian ideas and institutions survived and became Catholic which have a twofold origin. 'Catholic Christianity is the product of two converging lines which ultimately meet; of these two lines one begins with the prophets and may be traced through the later Psalms to its development in late Judaism, including early Christianity; the other line is discernible in the development of the Greek philosophy of religion, inclusive of the mysteries.' Not only do the two main lines converge and finally meet in the third and fourth centuries, but from them side lines diverge and meet each other.

St. Paul's high estimate of perfect knowledge is, in Harnack's opinion, accounted for by his Jewish education; even his conviction that the highest knowledge is the knowledge of God was not, in the first instance, derived from Platonism. A minute study of Nu 12⁸ is held to show, not only that it underlies v. 12, but that it explains the phrase which seems at first Platonic, namely, 'in a mirror.' The Pauline phrase δι' ἐσόπτρου corresponds to the LXX ἐν εἶδει (Heb. מראה). 'This word explains at once the βλέπομεν and the δι' ἐσόπτρου of Paul; for מראה means not only "seeing" and "what is seen," but also "appearance" as distinguished from "essence," and finally "mirror" (Ex 38⁸).' The figure of speech is accounted for by St. Paul's knowledge of the word as it occurs in the passage which was before his mind. He 'longed to see God, as once Moses was promised that he should see God; there is no necessity to have recourse to Plato.' It cannot, however, be denied that a Greek philosopher might have used this figure of speech, and it may be questioned whether St. Paul could have given such sublimity, by means of so slight a change, to the familiar saying, had he not breathed the Hellenic air. 'Two converging lines in world-history meet here.'

The sentence 'then shall I know even as also I have been known' would have been understood by Plato, but it would not have conveyed to his mind St. Paul's teaching. The Apostle's meaning is clear from 8⁸: 'If any man loveth God, the

same is known of him.' With the implication that truth and unrighteousness are incompatible, Plato was, however, in complete agreement.

Harnack's contention that throughout this chapter St. Paul is thinking of the love of one's neighbour does not carry conviction, and he himself acknowledges that 'for Paul love, even as love of our neighbour, is inseparable from the love of God.' In the Apostolic age he finds evidence of the *converging*, but not of the *meeting*, of two lines of development of thought: 'the humanitarian-Stoic, and the theistic-Jewish.' It is granted, however, that 'in Hellenism (as, e.g., in Epictetus) a strong religious element blended with the humanitarian conception.' Yet, strange to say, the thought of St. Paul is said to move only on the humanitarian line; apparently Harnack intends this assertion to be understood in the light of another statement which seems to justify a wider interpretation of 'love' in this chapter: 'in and with love to our neighbour, the love of God, religion itself, is included.' If the love of God and the love of our neighbour are conceptions so nearly akin, if indeed they form 'such a unity as to be interchangeable,' there seems to be no valid reason for confining St. Paul's statements concerning 'love' within humanitarian lines, more especially as Harnack lays special stress on the theistic-Jewish element in the Apostle's teaching.

In his closing paragraph Harnack reaffirms his conviction that 'as Paul was not a Greek, so he never became a Greek.' Yet Bishop Hicks has said: 'I never read 1 Co 13 without thinking of the virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. St. Paul's ethical teaching has quite a Hellenic ring. It is philosophical, as resting on a definite principle, namely, our new life in Christ; and it is logical, as classifying virtues and duties according to some intelligible principle' (*Studia Biblica*, ix. 9). Harnack would allow 'the Hellenic ring,' though probably he would not regard St. Paul's ethics as 'philosophical.' He is not surprised that some of the Apostle's ideas have been found growing in Greek soil; but he maintains that 'the Apostle would not have adopted them, unless they had fitted in with knowledge which he already possessed during his religious training as a Jew.' His experience, as a Christian, enabled him to transform this knowledge, but 'the Apostle of the Gentiles remained a Jew, in so far as he was not a Christian. . . . That his thoughts were influential subsequent

to the Hellenic age is due, in the first instance, not to the slight Greek element found in them, but to the power which enabled the Apostle anew to proclaim the ancient God of the Jews as the Father of Jesus Christ, and to place love at the centre.'

This fascinating and brilliant study suggests a further question: May not St. Paul's knowledge of the Christ in whom there is 'neither Jew nor Greek' explain the meeting in his teaching of the two converging lines? Even so far as this eulogy of love is concerned, there is great force in the

words of the Rev. Bernard Lucas: 'It was the life of love which Jesus lived which made the Psalm of love which Paul wrote possible. We have but to substitute Jesus for love, the person for the thing personified, and Paul's panegyric becomes a simple and perfect description of the historic Jesus. As a literal portrayal of the character of Jesus it cannot be surpassed. . . . Is it any wonder, therefore, that as a manifestation of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, Paul should assign the supreme place to love?' (*The Fifth Gospel*, p. 153).

In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

Skill.

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'There is not among us any who can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians.'—1 K 5⁶.

It is our wisdom to recognize that other people can do some things better than ourselves. It is our wisdom either to learn of them, or by fair business to avail ourselves of their skill. Some would say that in the building of the Temple, only Israelite material and Israelite workmanship should be used, even if inferior to what heathen Hiram could give. Solomon's wisdom said, 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein.' It is the cedars of God that grow on Lebanon. The heathen craftsmen have their skill from God. And so, the timber and the skill of the Sidonians were used, and at the dedication of the Temple Solomon made one prayer specially for strangers who might worship there, and a millennium later the Lord Jesus in purging the House declared that His Father's House was meant to be a House of prayer for all nations.

Instead of the Temple, built for the Name of the Lord for a time, we have now the Holy Scriptures, declaring the Word of the Lord for all time. Let us consider to whose skill it is due that we have a printed Bible, in which every one of us can commune with the Lord over all His Word to us. Could you skill to make that which is least—the ink with which your Bible is printed? Before you

could have your Bible, God had to have his gallies at work in His oak-forests, and His poor people gathering the oak-galls, and passing them on to His chemists who can now skill to produce that unfading ink with which Bibles are printed. Could you skill to manufacture the paper? Left to ourselves most of us would have to fall back on more primitive writing materials—bricks of clay, or tablets of wood, or skins and hides, or bulrushes sliced and pasted together, and we are debtors to all who through long centuries kept up their writing and preserved the Scriptures on these clumsy materials. For paper itself we are indebted to heathen Turkestan, and to the Arabs who there discovered it and the way to make it. But almost till the invention of printing six centuries later, Christian Europe scarce thought such a heathen and Muhammadan article worth minding. But now the rag-collector sorts out every scrap of linen to be used for a Bible or some book of value. Could you skill to put the rags through all the process needful to make the fine, firm, faultless paper of your Bible? You are indebted to those who can skill to do so, and you are indebted to the rag-gatherer. No rag-gathering, no Bible for you such as you have, to fit you for every good work, and in your good work you should forget neither the humble people nor the skilful people who have worked together to fashion the page on which the heavenly treasure is set forth to you.

Now we have to get that greatest thing, the Word of God, to put on the paper. That Word did not come forth from us. None of us could skill to produce it. It is God's Word—written by