

## XXVIII.

**The Suffering of Love.**

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.”—*John xv. 13.*



*Love suffers* because the spirit of the world antagonizes the Spirit of God. The former is unholy, the latter is holy, not in the sense of mere opposition to the world's spirit, but because He is the absolute Author of all holiness, being God Himself. Hence the conflict.

There is no point along the whole line of the world's life which does not antagonize the Holy Spirit whenever He touches it. Whenever we are tempted by the world and inwardly animated by the Holy Spirit, there is a clash in the conscience: As soon as one member breathes a worldly spirit and another testifies against it in the Spirit of holiness, there is trouble and strife in the family. When in state, school, church, or society a worldly tendency appears and a current from the divine Spirit, there is trouble and strife in one or all. These two oppose each other and can not be reconciled. Compromise is impossible. Either one, the worldly spirit, at last closes our hearts against the Holy Spirit, and then we are lost; or after long conflict the Holy Spirit vanquishes the world's spirit; then the prince of this world finds nothing in us, and our names are written in the gate of the New Jerusalem.

And this causes *love to suffer*. When love increases in our hearts, owing to the Holy Spirit's increasing activity, it must come into conflict with all that pertains to the world's spirit and seeks to maintain itself in the soul.

This is evident more or less in little children. Indulgence is the easiest, but not the best, method of education. The indulgent mother does not love her children, but sacrifices them to her weakness. She finds it easier not to oppose their wrongdoing; thus avoiding tears, contradiction, and ill-will. When they call her “darling mother” it is sweet music to her ear; hence she never looks displeased, and rather than deny them anything she anticipates their desires. So she loves, not them, but herself. Her aim is not their good, or the doing of God's will concerning them and herself; but to save unpleasantness and to insure to *herself* the children's affection. But not so she who loves her children with the Love shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. Actuated by His Love, looking upon them in His light, she seeks their eternal good. To her each child is a patient in need of bitter medicine, which she may not withhold. Her aim is not the gratification of the child's wish, but his highest advantage in the way of life. And this causes conflict; for while the indulgent mother is ever pleased with her children and ever ready to hear men praise them, the other is often tossed between hope and fear, saying; “What will the end be?” Moreover, the time will come when her child, not understanding her love, will resist her, when he will think her lovely only when she indulges him, when he will reward her devotion with angry look and voice and wilful disobedience, when



his conversation becomes constraint, when, regarding her as jealous of his pleasures, with a rebellious heart he will turn away from her love, while before God she is conscious that she seeks only his highest and holiest interests.

There is another picture of suffering love. There never arose among men one that had greater love than Christ. In the human heart love never shone with brighter light, never glowed with brighter flame of Love. Without measure He had received the Holy Spirit, who abode upon Him, who filled Him with tenderest love that pervaded the soul and softened the heart. His love understood the secret of embracing in truest intimacy all that was *human*, and at the same time of breathing love that came like a benediction to every *individual*. He gave Himself to the whole race, and He opens His heart for an old, blind Jew in the gate of Jericho. Such is the infinite, rich, and almost omnipotent power of His love. It encompasses eternity, yet there is no outcast, however degraded, too low for its compassions.

And what reception did the world prepare for Him? Did it offer Him love, honor, and admiration? Did it appreciate His holy love and kindle its own heart by its flame? On the contrary, the world was offended by it, could not bear it, counted it as mortal hatred; for He denied it its joys and sinful pleasures. He did not even smile when it was full of laughter, but when it begged for His applause He had only rebuke. He prevented the Jerusalem aristocrat from being a Pharisee, and the worldling from being a Sadducee. His whole appearance was a living protest against the world's regime. Hence the world opposed Him, treated His Love as hatred, and returned it with contempt. Of course, if He had only lamented when it mourned, or danced when it piped unto Him in the market-place, it would have built Him a throne. But since He loved it with a holy love and yielded not to its entreaty, therefore it beat Him, embittered His life, and covered Him with shame and mockery. And when He persisted to love and admonish, it pronounced its "Anathema," and the planting of the cross on Calvary was only a question of time.

And what it did to Jesus it has done to all His followers. He that yields is tolerated. He that makes room for the world's spirit receives burning of incense. He that makes compromise with it may be assured of honor and glory; but he that refuses to compromise, loving the world with holy love, must sooner or later experience its wrath. God's people in every place and nation have ever sung: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Every age has its martyr-history. And the best ages of our race, in which the Holy Spirit exerted His mightiest power, are but the times when the noblest and godliest saints suffered cruellest tortures and endured greatest wrongs.

Cause for love's suffering lies in its *origin*. Since it is the Holy Spirit who radiates its heat in the heart, and keeps its fire burning from moment to moment, the unholy hate and reject it.



Love can bear, but not *tolerate*, all things. It bears sufferings, because it does not tolerate the worldly spirit; but the cry of “mildness” and “moderation” never tempts it to quench the *hatred* with which it has entered the conflict with unholiness. For real *love* is also real *hatred*. He that loves feebly or falsely can not hate energetically. But if ardent, animating love reigns in your heart, then hatred reigns with it. He that loves the beautiful hates the ugly. He that loves harmony hates discord. In like manner, he that has fallen in love with holiness has conceived by the Holy Spirit an equally strong hatred for all unholiness. Love for Jesus can not exist but with *hatred* for Satan. And the best measure for the love of God in our hearts is the depth of contempt for sin.

He that loves the world hates God, and has made God his enemy; as the Catechism correctly remarks: “By nature we are prone to hate God and our neighbor.” “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” But the man whose soul overflows with the love of God hates the unholy spirit of the world in and around him, and fights against it until the hour of his death. David’s testimony “Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred” ([Psalm cxxxix. 21](#))—is only the reverse of the stamp of love. And if among those born of the will of man there never was one who could truly say, “Lord, I hate them with perfect hatred”; yet there was One in whose heart this hatred was deep and true, who alone could say “that He loved God with all His heart and soul and mind and strength.”

This mutual position is therefore very clear. There are degrees both in love and in hatred. In proportion as the heart beats strongly or feebly, *i.e.*, in proportion as the spirit of this world or the Holy Spirit dwells in us and animates us to stronger expression, in that proportion that love or that hatred shall rise in us in higher degree. And according to that degree shall the proportion of our present conflict, sorrow, and suffering be.

“Through suffering to glory” is true especially with reference to love. *Being love*, it can not be neutral or insensible. And while its contact with men causes it much suffering, this suffering is, increased by the conflict in its own bosom.

For this pure, holy love loves itself, but only in a holy sense. Altho it can not purge its heart all at once from all unholiness and impurity, yet it constantly wars against them and separates itself from them. And since in that conflict it is often convinced of its own lack of love and faithfulness, and of having grieved the divine Love, it sorrows much. Frequently it feels so humbled in the presence of Jesus that it scarcely dares look up to Him; humbled in the presence of His cross; conscious of its inability to self-sacrifice; humbled before its own loved ones whom it ought to bless, whom it frequently injures; and especially in the presence of the Holy Spirit, who tenderly sought to animate it, and whom it often silenced by this lack of courage and will power.



And this grieves the soul of the saint, who seeks in vain for the evidence of his sonship in the love of his own fickle heart. And if this love were of man, it would perish at last. But it is not. It is of the Holy Spirit, shed abroad and fanned by Him continually. Hence it is never quenched, but however near perishing, it is reanimated, and, burning anew with a bright flame, it reenters the conflict.

History offers the evidence. There were times when the early Church was nearly exterminated; when the Waldensians were nearly blotted out from the face of the earth; when our fathers consecrated and sacrificed their lives on this blood-drenched soil, in order not to deny the Lord their God. For among these martyrs there were men and women to whom it seemed impossible to give their lives for Christ; who often thought: "When it comes to me, I will surely fail." And yet when it did come, the Holy Spirit so graciously and extraordinarily *steeled* these souls that the cripple at once leaped like a hart, and they who did not think it possible to yield their goods, sacrificed their *lives* for His Name's sake. Then it was shown that in God's child the love of Christ is an eternal love, which, being born of *His* sacrifice, is stronger than death—yea, fearless in the presence of torture and martyrdom.



## XXIX.

**Love in the Old Covenant.**

“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.” — *John xiii. 34.*



In connection with the Holy Spirit's work of shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts, the question arises: What is the meaning of Christ's word, "A new commandment I give unto you"? How can He designate this natural injunction, "To love one another," a *new* commandment?

This offers no difficulty to those who entertain the erroneous view that during His ministry on earth Christ established a new and higher religion, to supersede the antiquated religion of Israel.

They assert that the ancient religious ideas of the Jews were crude, defective, and primitive, even far below pagan morality. Among Israel themselves it was an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. For their enemies they pursued vindictive hatred. They sang imprecatory psalms. And to crown all, they indulged the bloodthirsty desire of dashing the enemy's innocent babes against the stones. Among this rude and barbarous people Jesus arose to proclaim a higher and nobler religion. He said: "Ye have heard it was said of old time, 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!' but I say: 'Resist him not that is evil.' 'Ye have heard that it was said, 'Thou shalt hate thine enemy'; but I say unto you: 'Love your enemies.' And whatever shortsighted Moses may have taught ancient Israel, I, Jesus, give you a new commandment, that ye love one another."

In this sense the words "*new commandment*" offer no difficulty. "*New*," representing the Christian religion, is opposed to the "*old*," which stands for the Mosaic law. But however plausible, this representation is thoroughly false and contradicted by obvious facts.

In *Matt. v. 17-20*, Christ introduces the subject by showing that He does not oppose His Gospel as a superior code of morals to the antiquated and inferior Mosaic code, but that it is His aim, by opposing the *false interpretations* of Moses by the liberal, rabbinical schools, to restore the Mosaic law to its *legitimate position*. He says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, but to fulfil; not merely in a general sense, as tho the valuable germ which it may contain needed, for its development, only to be divested from its outward covering, but to fulfil it to its *very jot* or *tittle*. For whosoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven." From *verse 20* it is clear that He opposes, not the *righteousness of Moses*, but the *false interpretation* of it by the liberal rabbis.



And after this introduction He continues: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy." (*Matt. v. 43*) Did you ever find this in the Old Testament? Indeed not; on the contrary, in *Prov. xxv. 21* it reads: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink"; and in *Exod. xxiii. 3, 4*, Israel was taught: "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or ass going astray,