

XXXVIII.

Christ or Satan.

“But the greatest of these is Love.” — *1 Cor. xiii. 13.*

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However fearful the Scripture’s revelation of the hardening of heart, yet it is the only price at which the Almighty offers man the blessed promise of Love’s infinite wealth.

Light without shadow is inconceivable; and the purer and the more brilliant the light, the darker and the more distinctly delineated the shadows must be. In like manner, faith is inconceivable without the opposite of *doubt*; hope without the distressful tension of *despair*; the highest enjoyment of love without the keenest incision of *hatred*. If this is so among men, how much more strongly must it appear when God sheds abroad His love by the Holy Spirit?

Even among men love always loses in depth what it gains in breadth. Hence there are multitudes of men of whom all speak well and no one speaks ill; who, tho not pursued by hatred, are neither loved with passionate love. And there are men whom no one can treat with indifference; who inspire some with ardent love and others with violent hatred. How devoted the love of Timothy and Philemon for St. Paul, and with what hatred did the Jewish teachers persecute him! How affectionate the attachment of the circle of German Reformers for Martin Luther, and how bitter the violence of the Romish hierarchy against him! How deep and tender the love of our Christian people for Groen van Prinsteren, the noble champion of our Christian interests, and how fierce the hatred and bitterness wherewith the men of neutrality have pursued him all the days of his life! The court circles of St. Petersburg almost worship the Russian Czar, while every nihilist abhors him as an incarnate devil.

And this is true in every country and every age. As soon as love has taken root in the *soil of principles*, it separates the best friends and finds its opposite pole in the most fearful hatred. Love which is inspired only by amiable traits, which has no other ground than mutual good will, which is the daughter of a compliant disposition, which is supported by mutual service, burning of incense or self-interest, never arouses such hatred. But as soon as love adopts a nobler and holier character; when it loves the friend not for his appearance, disposition, winning ways, and pleasing forms, but in spite of his unyielding nature, stern claims, and disagreeable traits, simply because he is the bearer of a conviction, the interpreter of a principle, the mighty pleader of an ideal, then hatred can not tarry a year, but follows love in its wake, and rages as bitterly and violently as love’s attachment is tender and animating.

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This was never more obvious than in the Person of Christ. His contemporaries are entitled to fair treatment. With the exception of those to whom it had been specially revealed,

not one saw in the Rabbi of Nazareth the Son of God, the Hope of the Fathers, and the Promised Messiah. The great mass of the people hailed Him merely as the Hero of His conviction, the Preacher of Righteousness, One who was filled with zeal for high and holy principles.

And what does the history of His life reveal? That at the first meeting, enchanted by His holy eye, touched by His eloquent word, overcome by His word of love, men offer Him homage and join the hosannas of the multitudes. But also that this superficial acquaintance is soon followed by a change of inclination and disposition, in some developing into positive faith and entire surrender to His Person, and in others into hatred which becomes more violent day by day.

Jesus troubled no one. No bitter word ever escaped His lips. There were thousands whom He blessed and not one whom He harmed. Even the little children He drew to Himself and kissed their smiling lips. And yet, already at His first appearance in Nazareth, evil passions begin to rage against Him. What the wrong was that He had done no one could tell; but they could not bear Him; He annoyed them; He was to them an eyesore; He must go. So long as He remains in the land of the living, there can be no rest in Palestine, so they thought.

This accounts for the frequent efforts of the mob to stone and kill Him; for the foul epithets they applied to Him, saying "that He was beside Himself," "that He had a devil and was mad," "that He stirred up the people," that He was a "glutton" and "wine-bibber." And when all this was of no avail, and Jesus continued to inspire the few with still greater love, and the number of the Johns and Marys increased, then they judged that severer measures should be taken; then the hatred became persecution; then the honest women of Jerusalem cried, "His blood be upon us and upon our children" ([Matt. xxvii. 25](#)); and, thirsting after His blood, the mob cried, "Crucify Him!" and the tempest of unholy passion abated not until they saw Him dying upon the cross. Hence by the cross stood John and Mary, whose love for Jesus was never surpassed, side by side with the leaders of Jerusalem, who dare mock and defy Him even in His dying moments, while they almost suffocate with their own rage.

If Jesus had not come and openly testified of the Father, Jerusalem's grave gentlemen would never have been guilty of such base and dishonorable passions. In fact, His public appearance in Jerusalem and in Judea was the spark which ignited these passions. Without Him the rabbis would never have committed such heinous sin; if Jesus had not come from heaven, the earth would never have looked upon a hatred so base, bitter, and violent.

Why, then, did He not rather stay away? Why did He come on the earth? For He knew what hatred His coming would arouse. He knew that -indirectly- He would cause Iscariot to become a Judas, a child of the devil. He knew that He would become a fall and a rising again of many; a stone of stumbling; a sign that should be spoken against. He knew that by contact with Him thousands would become transgressors, and some even would commit



the sin against the Holy Ghost. He knew all this, for He suffered all by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. And yet He came. He spoke. He executed His awful task upon the earth, to be a Savior to thousands of souls, but also a rock of offense to thousands of others.

And why was He not prevented from coming, that all this terrible evil might be avoided? For the *sake of Love*, O children of the Kingdom!

For Love is *greatest*; Love is the highest *right*; and Love, full, rich, and divine, could *not* be shed abroad in the hearts of men but at this price. Love less great would have stirred up hatred less violent. If this Love had not come at all, hatred would have been wholly quenched. This Love alone aroused that hatred. Inflamed by the perfection of this Love, it broke forth into such demoniac maliciousness. No sooner does Love show its shining countenance than hatred belches forth its lurid flames. Without this fearful outbreak of unholiness, holiness can not exist in this sinful world.

This brings us back to the Holy Spirit. The character and power of any form of love are determined by the holy or unholy nature of the spirit which dwells in it. Of course, earthly love can not realize its highest power unless the Holy Spirit dwell in it and kindle its holy spark in the human heart. And since He animates all created life, He animates also the life of love; and then it begins to live, receives a soul, is truly animated, and the promise of the Father is fulfilled in the Church and in our hearts, and love is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost.

So the full and penetrating operation of love came only on Pentecost. Then the walls that separated Israel were broken down, and the river of its life disclosed its bed broad and deep for every people and nation. There were tongues as of fire, and there was a speaking with the tongues of all nations. They had all things in common. They were embraced in the union of one purpose. The melody of the psalm of praise pervaded every circle which called upon the name of the Lord.

But, alas! with the light of love came also the fearful shadow of hatred, which works obstinacy, ends in hardening, and adds unto itself the death by the sin against the Holy Ghost.

And this is a fearful thing. Yet if you could prevail upon the Father of Lights to quench the pure light of love, would you say: "Lord, quench it"? Would you dare pray that the shedding abroad of that love should cease from the earth?

And thus, amid the differences, wranglings, and discords, amid the tumult of hatred and the din of profanity and blasphemy, the work of redemption goes on, and the operation of the Holy Spirit continues to fulfil the counsel of God. Thus the King reigns royally; souls are converted; the rebellious are comforted; acts of self-denial and noble consecration are multiplied; pity shines and mercy scintillates; and, hid from the eyes of men, perfect love



cherishes the soul that was chilled by its own guilt, and imparts to the earth something of the sweetness and blessedness of its own holy being.

And all this will continue until the Church militant has finished its last fight. Then shall the end come, the token of the Son of Man shall be seen in the clouds, and then only the consummation of glory shall appear, wherein every work of the profane spirit shall be destroyed and the work of the Holy Spirit shall be completed—completed in the manifestation of glory, in the wiping away of many tears, in the removing of every hindrance, in the beholding of what eyes have never seen and the hearing of what ears have never heard, in the ecstasy of what never has entered the human heart; but, more than all this, in the perfect revelation of love in its holiest and purest manifestation, in the undisturbed communion with the Lord our God.



Third Chapter.

PRAYER.

