

## “Brotherly Love”

*Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, Vol. I:160-162. [1915]

1. Meaning of the words and usage.—The word *φιλαδελφία* occurs in the NT in Rom. 12:10, 1 Thess. 4:9, Heb. 13:1, 1 Peter 1:22, 2 Peter 1:7. The AV renders it in the first three passages “brotherly love,” in the fourth “love of the brethren,” in the last “brotherly kindness” (in order to mark a qualitative as well as a quantitative distinction between *φιλαδελφία* and the following *αγάπη*). The RV has in all passages “love of the brethren,” which is more correct, since in the Greek word the second part takes the place of an objective, not a subjective, genitive. The adjective *φιλαδελφος* is found in 1 Peter 3:8. The original meaning of the word is the literal one of love for brothers (and sisters) by blood-relationship (cf. Xen. *Mem.* 2.3.17, “loving one like a brother”; Jos. *Ant.* 4.2.4, where the word is used of Moses and Aaron; Lucian, *Dial. Deor.* 26.2, where it is used of Castor and Pollux). In the NT it has only the metaphorical sense of love towards the fellow-members of the Church—a usage which already occurs in earlier Jewish writings (cf. 2 Mac. 15:14, the love of Israelite towards Israelite). It should be noted that “the brotherhood” (1 Peter 2:17) to which this love applies is nowhere in the NT humanity as such. “Brethren” is not the correlate of the universal Fatherhood of God, but of that specific paternal relation which God sustains to believers (cf. Matt. 23:8, 9). The NT conception has its root in the redemptive experience of Israel (Zech. 11:14, Mal. 2:10) and of the Apostolic Church. It obtains its significance for universalism through the missionary extension of this, not through philosophical abstraction from all positive differences as is the case with the Hellenic idea of cosmopolitanism. Even where the duty of love for all men is based on kinship by nature, this is traced back to creation in the image of God (James 3:9). In 1 Thess. 3:12 love towards the fellow-members of the Church and towards all is explicitly distinguished, but it is uncertain whether “all” here means all Christians or all men. In 2 Peter 1:7 “love” appears as something supplementary to “brotherly love”; the context here requires the reference of this “love” to man; the distinction between *φιλαδελφία* and *αγάπη* must therefore lie in the range of extent; at the same time the difference in the word used suggests the deeper and more intimate character of brotherly love (cf. *φιλειν* in John 5:20, 16:27). In Gal. 6:10 a distinction is made between the working of good toward “all men” and toward “them that are of the household of the faith.”

2. The primacy of love in Christianity.—The distinctiveness of Christianity lies not so much in the theoretical discovery or proclamation of the principle of love, either as constitutive in the Divine character or as regulative for human conduct, but rather in the production of forces and motives which give to the principle a new concrete reality in the life of men (cf. Mark 12:32, Luke 10:27, 1 John 2:7, 3:4). Still, even as a subject of teaching, love occupies a prominent place in the apostolic writings. It appears not merely as one important factor among others in the Christian life, but as its chief and most characteristic ingredient, greater even than faith and hope (1 Cor. 13:13). The Pastoral Epistles utter a warning against the absorption of the religious interest by the false gnosis and its asceticism or impure love to the detriment of true Christian love (1 Tim. 1:5, 5:8, 2 Tim. 2:22-25, 3:1-4, 10). The primacy of love also finds expression in such passages as Rom. 13:8-10, Eph. 1:4, James 2:5, Rev. 2:4.

3. Love for God.—The love thus made prominent is, before all else, love towards God. Ritschl’s view, that the NT writers, especially St. Paul, conceive of love towards God as something difficult of attainment, and therefore hesitate to speak of it, except in the quotation which underlies Rom.

8:28, 1 Cor. 2:9, 8:3, James 1:13, 2:5, is not borne out by the facts. Against it speaks 2 Thess. 2:5. Conceptions like “living unto God” (Rom. 6:10-11, Gal. 2:19), “pleasing God” (Rom. 8:8, Gal. 1:10, 1 Thess. 4:1), “offering sacrifice to God” (Rom. 12:1, 15:16, Phil. 4:18, Heb. 13:15, 1 Pet. 2:5), “serving God” (Rom. 1:9, 7:6, 16:18, 1 Thess. 1:9, 2 Tim. 1:3, Heb. 9:14), all imply that the Christian’s religious life is inspired by an affection directly terminating upon God (cf. also 1 Cor. 14:2, Rev. 2:10, 13). It is unwarranted, where the conception of love occurs without further specification of the object, to think exclusively of the fraternal affection among Christians mutually. In many cases the writers may have had in mind primarily the love for God. The very fact that Christian love must be exercised in imitation of Christ favors this primary Godward reference (Eph. 5:2). Nor is it correct to say that the only mode of expressing love to God lies in the service of men. 1 John 4:12 is often quoted in proof of this, but the passage in the context means no more than that the invisibility of God exposes man in his feeling of love for Him to the danger of self-deception, which can be guarded against by testing oneself in regard to the actual experience of love for the brethren. Hence in 5:2 the opposite principle is also affirmed, viz., that the assurance of the genuineness of one’s love for the brethren is obtainable from the exercise of love and obedience towards God. Only in so far as the love of God assumes the form of concrete deeds of helpfulness, it cannot serve God except in the brethren.

4. Interdependence of the love for God and love for the brethren.—The love for God and the love for the brethren are not, according to the apostolic teaching, two independent facts. In examining their relation, it should be remembered that the love for God and the love for Christ are to the NT practically interchangeable conceptions, Christ no less than God being the source and recipient of religious devotion (Eph. 3:19). This may be most strikingly illustrated by a comparison of the Gospel and the First Epistle of John: in the latter, love is derived from and attached to God precisely after the same manner as in the Gospel it is derived from and attached to Christ. The close union of love for God (and Christ) and love for the brethren can be traced both objectively and subjectively. *Objectively* it may be followed along these lines: the Divine purpose and the redemptive process do not contemplate the production of love or God in isolated individuals, but in the Church as the organic community of believers. It is through the conjoined love for God and the brethren that the Church is and works as an organism (1 Cor. 12, Eph. 3:17), “rooted and grounded in love” (Eph. 3:17, cf. Col 3:14 “the bond of perfectness”); hence the same term, *κοινωνία*, “communion,” is used for the fellowship with God and Christ and the fellowship with the brethren (1 Cor. 1:9, 2 Cor. 6:14, 8:4, Phil. 1:5, 3:10, 1 John 1:3, 6-7); the act which produces love for God simultaneously produces love for the brethren, and the same Spirit which underlies and inspires the former likewise underlies and inspires the latter (Rom. 15:30, 2 Cor. 6:6, Gal. 5:22, Eph. 1:4, 6:23, Col. 1:8, 1 Thess. 3:12, 4:9, 1 John 3:14); the inseparableness of the two also finds expression in the figure of the family or household of God (Gal. 6:10, Eph. 2:19, 1 John 1:7, 2:9, 5:1 [where, however “him that is begotten” may refer to Christ and not to the fellow believer]). *Subjectively* the interdependence of love for God and love for the brethren presents itself as follows: through the recognition of the inclusiveness of the love of God the experience of the same acts as a motive-power for the Christian to include those whom God loves in his own love likewise; the Christian also recognizes that he is not merely the object of the Divine love, but also the instrument of its manifestation to others; he serves man in the service of God (Rom. 6:13, 1 Cor. 7:23, 2 Cor. 8:5, Phil. 2:17, 2 Tim. 4:6); the love of God and Christ shown him becomes to the believer an example of love to the brethren (Rom. 14:15, 1 Cor. 8:11, 2 Cor. 8:8-9, Eph. 4:32, 5:2, Phil. 2:4ff., 1 John 4:11); the idea of a close union between the two

also underlies the formula “faith energizing through love” (Gal. 5:6). Here faith as the right attitude towards God as Redeemer begets love for Him, which in turn becomes the active principle of service to others (cf. v. 13). Because the love for others is thus founded on, and regulated by, the love for God, it not only does not require but forbids fellowship with such as are in open opposition to God and Christ (1 John 2:15, 5:16, 2 John 10, Rev. 2:2, 6).

5. The origin of brotherly love.—Religious love in general is a supernatural product. It originates not spontaneously from a sinful soil, but in response to the sovereign love of God, and that under the influence of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5, 8, 8:28, 1 Cor. 8:3 [where “is known of him” = “has become the object of his love”], Gal. 4:9 [where “to be known by God” has the same pregnant sense], 1 John 4:10, 19). Love for the brethren specifically is also a product of regeneration (1 Pet. 1:22, 23; cf. 1:2-3). Especially in St. Paul, the origin of brotherly love is connected with the supernatural experience of dying with Christ, in which the sinful love of self is destroyed, and love for God, Christ, and the brethren produced in its place (Rom. 6:10ff., 7:4, 8:1-4, 2 Cor. 5:14-16, Gal. 2:19-20). Accordingly, love for the brethren appears among other virtues and graces as a fruit of the Spirit, a *charisma* (Rom. 15:30, 1 Cor. 13, Gal. 5:22, 6:8-10). Although this is not explicitly stated in Acts, there is no doubt that St. Luke (if not the early disciples themselves) derived the manifestation of love in the Mother-church from the influence of the Spirit.

6. The essence of brotherly love.—A psychological definition of brotherly love is nowhere given in the apostolic writings, but certain notes and characteristics are prominently brought out.

These are: (1) *On the positive side.*— (a) *Personal attachment and devotion.* The formulae for this are “to give oneself,” “to owe oneself,” “to seek the person” (2 Cor. 8:5, 12:14, Philemon 19). There is among the brethren an inner harmony of willing (Acts 4:32). As such an inward thing true love goes beyond all concrete acts of helpfulness: it means more even than feeding the poor or giving one’s body to be burnt (1 Cor. 13:3); it involves an absolute identification in life-experience, which goes to the extent of bearing the burden of sorrow for the sins and the weaknesses of others (Rom. 15:1, 1 Cor. 2:5, 2 Cor. 7:3, Gal. 6:2).— (b) *An energetic assertion of the will to love.* Love does not consist in mere sentiment; it is subject to the imperative of duty. St. Paul speaks of it as a matter of pursuit and zealous endeavor (1 Cor. 14:1); it involves strenuous labor (1 Thess. 1:3 [where “the labor of love” is not the labor performed by love, but the labor involved in loving]). Hence also its voluntariness is emphasized (2 Cor. 9:7), and the continuance of its obligation insisted upon (Rom. 13:8).— (c) *Concrete helpfulness to others.* The NT throughout preaches the necessity for love to issue into practical furtherance of the interests of others. This is emphatically true even of St. Paul, notwithstanding his insistence on faith as the sole ground of salvation. The Apostle, because governed by the principle of the glory of God as subserved by the love of God, requires the work as essential to the completeness of love. “Good works” is a standing formula in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 2:10, 5:10, 25, 6:18, 2 Tim. 2:21, 3:17, Titus 1:16, 2:7, 14, 3:1, 8); but it also appears in Acts 9:36, Rom. 13:3, 14:6, 1 Cor. 6:20, 10:31, 2 Cor. 9:8, Eph. 2:10, Col. 1:10, Heb. 10:24, 1 Pet. 2:12, Rev. 2:2, 19, 23, 26, 3:2, 8, 15, 14:13, 20:12, 22:12. Hence the reference to the “members” as organs of the service of God (Rom. 6:13, 12:1). The test of love lies in its helpfulness (Rom. 14, 1 Cor. 8). Love “edifies,” i.e. builds up, the fellow Christian (1 Cor. 8:1). It contributes, however, not exclusively, nor even primarily, to the material or intellectual, but to the spiritual benefit of others (1 Cor. 8:1). The NT avoids the errors both of the Jewish and of the Hellenic practice of ethics. In Judaism the external acts had become

too much detached from the personal spirit of devotion. In Hellenism the interest was too much turned inward and absorbed by a self-centered cultivation of virtue as such. Because all conduct is thus determined by the supreme principle of love as helpfulness, all casuistry is excluded and ethical problems are all reduced to the one question: what will benefit my brother? This absence of all casuistic treatment of ethical questions is characteristic of St. James as well as of St. Paul.

(2) *On the negative side.—The negation of self.* Love for the brethren originates only through the death of the sinful love of self. Those who die this death no longer live to themselves (2 Cor. 5:15, Gal. 2:19, 6:14, Phil. 2:4, 21); love is the opposite of all self-pleasing and self-seeking (Rom. 15:1ff., 2 Cor. 2:4, 7, Gal. 1:10, 1 Thess. 2:5, Eph. 6:6, Phil. 1:16ff., Col. 3:22). It excludes every selfish cult of individuality (Rom. 12:17, 14:18, 15:2), all vain-glorying and excessive self-consciousness (Rom. 3:27, 12:3, 1 Cor. 1:29, 3:21, 4:7, Phil. 2:3, 1 Thess. 2:6), all envious comparison of self with others (Rom. 12:3, Gal. 4:17), all personal anger or resentment (2 Cor. 2:5, 12:20, Gal. 5:20, Eph. 4:26, 31, 6:4, Phil. 1:17, Col. 3:8, 1 Tim. 2:8); it is not, however, inconsistent with wrath for the sake of Christ and God (2 Cor. 2:7, Gal. 1:8, 1 Thess. 4:14-16, Rev. 2:2, 15, 19, 6:10, 16, 14:10), with a strong sense of the independence of men in the service of God (1 Cor. 9:1, 19, Gal. 2:6, 5:1), with the right to glory in the distinction which God's grace has conferred (1 Cor. 1:31, 4:4, 2 Cor. 1:14, 7:14, 10:7, 11:10, 12:9, Gal. 6:14, Phil. 2:16).

7. Forms of manifestation of brotherly love.—As such the following are conspicuously mentioned. (1) The external expression of the inward unity of love in the form of *common meals*, the *αγαπαι* (Acts 2:42, 1 Cor. 11:17-34, 2 Pet. 2:13, Jude 12). (2) The *κοινωνια* of benevolence through the *altruistic use of private means* (Acts 4:32, Rom. 12:20, 15:26, 2 Cor. 8:2-5, 9:13, 12:14-15, Gal. 2:10, 6:10, Heb. 6:10, 13:16). This *κοινωνια* was not, however, in the early Church a "community of goods" in the modern sense (cf. Acts 4:34-35 with 5:4). In the case of enemies, benevolence becomes the only form in which love can express itself (Rom. 12:20, Gal. 6:10). (3) The *missionary extension of the blessings of salvation* to others. The duty of missions is distinctly put on the basis of love. Primarily this means love for God and Christ (Rom. 1:9, 1 Cor. 9:17, 2 Cor. 4:13, 5:20); but secondarily it signifies also love towards men (Rom. 1:4; cf. 13:8 and Eph. 5:28, 1 John 1:1ff.). It is characteristic of apostolic missions that they are not related to the individual but to the organism of the Church, and conceived not as an unconscious influence, nor as a secret propaganda (like the Jewish mission), but as an open proclamation and a deliberate pursuit. In the last analysis this is due to the consciousness that the Church as an organism is the instrument through which God and Christ bring their love to bear upon the world.