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known to them (cf. vv. 41, 42). The oldest authority for the text (the Bodmer papyrus of John, c. A.D. 200) reads: 'out of Galilee the prophet does not arise'—that is to say, it was not from Galilee that the prophet foretold by Moses in Deut. 18:15 would come. Not that there was any definite indication where he would come from, but they felt they could be sure that whatever region produced him, it would not be Galilee.

(To be continued)

'IN LOVE'

W. WILCOX

Much is said and written on the subject of love. In theory, its importance as an element in Christian character is held to be supreme. But do we find it manifested in the practical life as much as might be expected from the position we assign to it in theory? The Scriptures ever keep the right balance showing that deep, strong love of God for man, and of man to man, and also emphasizing its practical outflow in act and deed. We may note some striking references to such in the Scriptures:

1. *Be Rooted and Grounded in Love.* Eph. 3:17. Paul is praying for the Ephesian saints and expresses their need to be strengthened with power, rooted in love and strong to apprehend. It is with the latter two items that we are specially concerned here.

(a) *The Inward Cause.* Their great need, as also ours, is to realize the indwelling of the Christ in the heart, and that not as a passing thing, but as an abiding reality. For Paul uses a word which means 'to settle down and make a home' in the heart. If Christ has come into the life and made His home there, then our life will become characterized by Christ-like qualities. As He loved, being rooted and grounded in that deep, eternal love which existed in all His relationships in the heavenlies, so we shall be, because of His indwelling, rooted and grounded in love, and this will manifest itself in all our relations with God and man.

(b) *The Firm Basis.* The natural plant grows because it is rooted in the soil and draws from it those elements which sustain and promote its growth. The believer, by his intake of love, sustains and promotes that growth in love which will manifest itself in his conduct.

The edifice which is to be erected needs a firm basis, a true foundation; thus only can the edifice weather every storm and remain strong for the purpose for which it was erected.

The believer's life being grounded upon love will so be strong to endure every buffet of adverse circumstances, and yet, tenderly enfold within its embrace of love all that is of God.

(c) *The Resulting Consequence.* Love is not that sickly sentimentality such as is sometimes depicted by poets. It is indeed strong, strong in its inner depths, strong in its sustaining powers, and strong in its stimulus to mental effort. Here it leads to a strong apprehension of the love of Christ, an apprehension that leads on to being 'filled unto all the fulness of God'.

Let every mental power be exerted to grasp the love of Christ and its significance, let every energy of love be a response to that energising love of the Lord; let every expression of love be an expression in terms of that love of Christ already released within the heart.

2. *Love that 'may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment'*. Phil. 1:9. cp. 1 Thess. 4:10. Again the Apostle prays for those to whom he writes his letter, and again love is one of the elements he desires to see manifested in them.

(a) *Its Increase*—it is love that abounds. The more love is given the more it grows, but love that withholds becomes stunted and poor. If God has shed His love abroad in our hearts, and He has, then the believer should shed his love abroad among those he seeks to influence God-ward.

(b) *Its Discernment.* But love is not to be broadcast merely,—it is to abound in knowledge and all discernment. These two limiting but deepening conditions are greatly neglected today. There is a tendency to suggest that almost any agency that professes the Name of Christ should be embraced with open arms.

But that is not the love here prayed for. The Apostle realizes that love must be with knowledge, such knowledge as is able to discern, and so embrace the true but reject the spurious.

As the knowledge of the true deepens, so the love will deepen. It will be like the flowing of the deep stream, ever flowing with placid pace and reflecting face, ever giving but ever receiving, ever blessing others while being blessed itself.

(c) *Its Approving.* It approves 'the things that are excellent'. The sense of the word rendered 'approved', is to test with the purpose of approving. So love does not hesitate to put to the test objects to which it extends itself, but it always does so in the expectation that the object will not be found false, but true.

If love is to forge its strong bonds around some other, then it must be able to approve of that other. Should such approval be found wanting, the bonds in that measure will become weakened, and may finally disappear altogether.

Knox translates the passage, 'May your love grow richer and richer yet, in the fulness of its knowledge and the depth of its perception, so that you may learn to prize what is of value'. This suggests that the love as it grows richer will be able to discriminate, and so prize that which it discovers to be of value, and reject that which is valueless.

3. *Keep yourselves in the Love of God.* Jude 21. In verse 1, Jude has told his readers that they are 'beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ', while in verse 21 they are exhorted to 'keep themselves in the Love of God'. These two aspects of their Christian life are ever kept before the mind of the believer, viz., as if all depended upon the Grace of God, and as if all depended upon the believer to keep himself in the sphere of grace and love. Thus all is of God as to the provision He has made, but the enjoyment of that provision depends upon man's being in the right condition before Him. Therefore Paul urges upon Timothy, 'Keep thyself pure' (1 Tim. 5:22) and James reminds man of the necessity to 'keep himself unspotted from the world'. (James 1:27) We may notice:

(a) *The Activities of Life.* Building, praying, looking, all so necessary to Christian life and service. The promotion of growth, the pledge of communion, and the prospect of bliss are aids of untold value for life and expressions of inestimable worth of life.

(b) *The Application to Life.* 'Keep yourselves'. The Love of God is looked upon as the sphere in which the believer lives, this environing element being essential to the continuance and sustenance of his spiritual life. To move out of that sphere would be to court death, to remain in it is to seek life. To keep himself in it he must be true to its conditions, as Moffat comments, 'God's Love has its own terms of communion'. Our Lord Himself says, 'If ye love Me ye will keep My commandments'. So that in that love there is a harmony of will which manifests itself in obedience.

Ever in the believer's life there will be the desire to be obedient to the divine will, not as imposed law, but as a spontaneous expression of a love which has been begotten in him by God's Love.

(c) *The Associations in Life.* Here as in the writings of Paul and of John, love stands not alone; it is associated with faith and hope. These believers are to 'build themselves up on their most holy faith', and to 'look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life'.

4. *Speaking Truth in Love.* Eph. 4:15 or as Salmond translates it 'Truthing it in love'. Truth without love may develop into legalist formulae, love without truth may issue in latitudinarianism, but truth with love keeps a true balance, making truth lovable and love truthful.

In the context the Apostle puts

(a) *Truth in contrast to error.* The teachers of error were already at work; sometimes in open revolt against the truths propounded by the Apostles, and sometimes by the insidious suggestions of the intellectualized approach favoured by certain forms of gnosticism. Those who imbibed these erroneous cults the Apostle says are evidencing their (i) *Immaturity*—they are like

children who are easily swayed by the appeal of the moment, having formed no settled judgement, and being unable to discern the nature and far-reaching results of such errors.

(ii) *Instability*. Even if they have made some apparent advance in the knowledge of the truth, they have done so not because of conviction as to the truth, and hence they become easy prey to every new teacher or plausible teaching that may come their way. Hence the Apostle is ever reminding his readers of the necessity to 'Stand fast' and to 'Be steadfast'. To such exhortations the present day believer would do well to take heed, for shallowness in thinking and readiness to indulge in novelties, result in many being easily caught in the pretentious advances of erroneous teachers.

(b) *Love as opposed to Craftiness*. Love can never be cunning, it must always be open and above-board. Love embraces but craft deceives; love enriches, while craft impoverishes; love endures patiently, but craft demands impatiently. Hence Paul exhorts these saints to be as it were, the embodiment of truth, and that not in a merely passive sense, but actively, being the truth, confessing the truth, living and loving the truth.

Love is again to be the enviroing medium in which such active truth is to operate, so that the truth will live in love. In such way will the believer be preserved from error and from legalism.

(c) *Growth as opposed to stagnation*. This 'truthing it in love' is for the definite purpose that there may be growth. Here he uses a peculiar turn of phrase, 'grow up . . . into Him'. Commentators have found it a difficult notion and have variously translated it 'unto Him', 'in relation to Him', and 'into Him'. But as the thought of unity in the body is developed in the succeeding verses, it would seem as if 'into Him' conveys the real thought as well as the literal translation.

It is because Paul immediately adds 'which is the head, even Christ', that difficulty is found for, it is asked, can we think of the believer 'growing up into the head?' It may be remarked that the first phrase is 'growing up into Him', and that is clearly the thought of much of the chapter, viz., of a vital union and oneness with

Christ. Afterwards he adds that Christ is the head and so leads to the thought that to grow into Him is also to grow into the head, for from Him all the body is fitly framed and knit together.

5. *Building up in Love.* Eph. 4:16. It was easy for Paul to pass from the idea of growth to that of building, but not here of something being built, but of the body building itself up. In order so to do every part must be active, every joint must articulate correctly, and every member contribute to its increase. This can only be so if there be no self-seeking on the part of each of the members, but only a desire to see 'the increase of the body', and such a desire must have for its animating motive—love. For as He Who is 'the Head', is the Son of God's love, so they who are united in Him, must be the children of love.

To return to the metaphor of 'building' each several part must be cohered in love and so grow into on complete unity: love being both the sphere in which it grows and the condition of its growth.

It must be confessed that too often is such love absent from some of our local Assemblies which are the local expressions of the whole body. This fact calls for humiliation before God and a seeking of that spirit of love which shall enable the body to grow.

6. *Walk in Love.* Eph. 5:2. The love which coheres the whole body is now to be expressed in the individual believer's life. He is to 'walk in love'. We note:

(a) *An Example to Follow.* The Apostle exhorts them to 'be imitators of God'. In other passages he invites the believer to 'be imitators of me as I also am of Christ', but here he gives the very highest terms of reference and puts before them God as their example. And this he does mainly because God is love and from that love flows His kindness, His tender-heartedness, His forgiveness, all of which stem from the fact that He is Love.

To be an imitator of God, therefore, is to love as He loves and also to hate those things that He hates; to forgive as He forgives while also not condoning evil; to be holy as He is holy, but not being self-righteous.

(b) *A Condition to Enjoy.* He speaks of these saints as 'beloved children'. They were the children in the faith of the Apostle

but they were also 'children of God'. What a relationship had become theirs! And what a blessed and honoured condition is ours when we remember with John, that 'we are children of God'.

But the writer goes on to use a further epithet, 'beloved'. What a wealth of meaning is conveyed by its use. They were very dear to his heart; for them he had toiled and laboured, for them he had endured persecution and privation. They were dear to him. But they were also dear to God, and as such were doubly beloved.

(c) *A Life to Love*. 'As imitators of God, and as dear children', they were to 'walk in love'. Every step in life, every act in life, every speech in life was to be 'in love'. Love was to be its motive, love was to stir to action, and love was to enfold the result. Christ loved, Christ gave Himself a sacrifice and so showed the ultimate extent to which love will go. That kind of love is to be the love manifested in the believer's life.

7. *Abiding in Love*. 1 John 4:16. Love is not to be spasmodic but the continuing element of the Christian's life. By his abiding in love is manifest that he is abiding in God. So is love perfected with us and enables us to have boldness in the day of judgement.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

H. L. ELLISON, B.A., B.D.

2. Palestine

The geographer, who is little concerned either by political boundaries or ethnic claims, sees the portion of the Fertile Crescent bounded to the north by the mountains of Anatolia and Armenia, to the east by the Euphrates and the Arabian desert, to the west by the Mediterranean and to the south by the Sinai desert, as a unity he calls Syria. There are natural divisions within it, but they are of less importance than the unity of the whole.