

AGAPE LOVE HAS MANY FACETS

(Discourse to Bellingham Home Ecclesia, Sunday, Oct. 20, 1974 by Theodore A. Smith.)

Agape Love—what it is, how it functions and how it is manifested—has been in my thoughts for many months past. About ten days ago a title to a study on Agape Love came to my mind, and this gave me the key that opened up a line of reasoning that appealed to me as logical and scriptural. It is a delight to share with others that which had been a blessing to one's own heart and mind. The title to our study—AGAPE LOVE HAS MANY FACETS.

If we limit our thinking about Agape Love to the 13th chapter of First Corinthians, we are making a serious mistake, in that our understanding would be very limited. The 13th chapter of First Corinthians is Paul's effort to inform the Christians of his day that there was a higher manifestation of the possession of the Holy Spirit than the mere speaking in tongues or in the power to reveal prophecy or speak the Gospel message or have special knowledge. This higher manifestation would be growth in character—in the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The fruit or growth in the spirit is listed for us by [Paul in](#) Gal. 5:22 and 23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

We are faced with the necessity to possess accurate knowledge and understanding as to the many facets of love, agape love. We say again, if we limit our study of agape love to the 13th chapter of First Corinthians we are making a mistake; and we feel that this is exactly what some brethren are doing.

At the date, Sept., 15, 1909, on Reprint page 4479 we find an article from the pen of the Pastor entitled VARYING DEGREES OF LOVE. We have brought to our attention that such qualities as "gentleness, meekness and patience are indeed elements of the holy character, the holy mind, which the Lord will develop in us: but they are not the sum of this character, which we call love. They are only twigs or branches, as it were, on the great tree of Christian faith and fellowship—twigs and branches which are duplicated to some extent on other trees and on other vines than that of 'the Father's right hand planting.'" (R4480-6) If we study carefully the subject of love as revealed in God's Word we will find that the Pastor is absolutely correct in saying that these qualities are twigs and branches, rather than the main branches or trunk of the character tree of love. And it is of utmost importance that we understand just what the character tree of love is—what agape love is and what it does.

In Matt. 22:36 to 39 we read the words of Jesus in answer to the question: "Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first

and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” This is agape love for God and for our neighbor. And the word agape love is used by Jesus when he said that our love is proved by keeping the Word of God—“If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 15:14) And in John 13:34 we read of a new commandment given by Jesus: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” And vs. 35 expresses an important fact—“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” The important question then is, what is meant by agape love, and what does it do, or how is it manifested?

Let us start out with some basic principles. Nothing could be more basic than the words of Jesus about the two great commandments—agape love toward God, and agape love toward man. Jesus was the perfect example in agape love for God. What did he do? In John 15:10 Jesus said, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”

Jesus’ agape love for God was manifested in laying down his life in behalf of his disciples. He taught them knowledge they needed to be his disciples. His longest continuous course of instruction was his “sermon on the mount,” and this is recorded in three whole chapters in the book of Matthew—chapters 5, 6 and 7. Another course of instruction which was given to his 12 disciples is found in Matthew, 10th chapter, and there are 42 verses in this chapter. The most touching of all is his final sermon to his beloved disciples, after Judas had left the twelve to betray him to the Jewish authorities. This was given to the disciples on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane after the final passover and the institution of the Memorial of his death. All this is recorded in the 15th and 16th chapters of the book of John. And the 17th chapter is the record of the prayer Jesus offered in behalf of his faithful eleven disciples. Truly he “loved his disciples to the end” with instruction and a tender prayer as a farewell before his death and ascension to the Father’s presence. Truly all this was agape love to God in caring for the disciples, and agape love to the disciples personally.

At times, Jesus was critical—Peter was given a severe rebuke. All this was agape love because they were things that the disciples needed for their education and eternal welfare. In Matthew, 8th chapter we find the account of the storm that arose. Jesus was asleep and the disciples were alarmed and woke Jesus out of sleep—“Lord, save us; we perish.” Jesus’ response was perhaps unexpected—“Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith.” Now we know Jesus was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” So we know this remark was not because Jesus was annoyed, or impatient or haughty. No, this was somehow associated with agape love for his disciples. Perhaps Jesus was teaching the disciples a lesson of trust in God, and faith in Himself as the Sent of God. If this were the lesson, it certainly was clinched by the manifestation of divine power by Jesus. This

could be suggested by the remark of the disciples—“What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!?”

A somewhat similar episode is recorded in the 14th chapter of Matthew. The disciples were in a ship on the sea and the “wind was contrary.” “And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.” The disciples “were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.” “But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” Again we must conclude these words were uttered in agape love for a disciple. He wanted Peter to grow in faith. The episode ends with these words, “Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.”

The disciples were given a very mild rebuke when they tried to prevent parents from bringing their little children to Jesus that he might put his hands on them and pray. In Matt. 19:14 Jesus said to his disciples: “Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus had agape love for his dear disciples, and he didn’t hesitate at any time to teach lessons—lessons that the disciples needed to grow in character. They were taught not to be haughty toward the people, for Jesus, despite his exalted position was very tender hearted toward little people and innocent children. They must not be allowed to get the idea that it would be proper for them to uphold the dignity of Jesus by forbidding parents and children to come to him. If Jesus had let this matter pass, the disciples might have become proud over being the disciples of the Messiah. Jesus, in his agape love for his disciples taught them necessary lessons in Christian conduct.

And when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane he taught his disciples another lesson. He took three of his disciples and went aside to pray. In the 26th chapter of Matthew, beginning with Vs. 38 we find the record: “Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Three times Jesus prayed and three times he returned to the three disciples and found them asleep. Jesus had agape love for his disciples and perhaps his mild rebuke would impress upon them that there were times when it was important to pay careful attention to the exhortation to “Watch and pray,” for there is

always reason for everything the Lord would say. And we can benefit from this episode and be alert and wide awake when we are taught to walk circumspectly and “watch and pray.” We can be certain that Jesus was not asking the disciples to endure special sacrifice for his sake, but for their own sakes.

Let us consider for a moment Jesus’ visit in the home of Martha. This is recorded in the 10th chapter of Luke. We read now, starting with Vs. 38: “Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.” Jesus was a guest in the home of Martha, but he did not hesitate to teach a needed lesson—a lesson given in agape love to Martha: “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” This was indeed a rebuke, but Jesus had agape love for both of these women and he spoke the Necessary words to teach Martha a lesson, and commend Mary for her wise course in listening to the greatest teacher that had ever lived up to that time. Jesus was far more interested in imparting divine instruction to any who would listen, than to enjoy special courtesies on the part of a gracious hostess.

What a wonderful lesson Jesus taught his disciples in washing their feet on the occasion of the Passover. Let us read from John, starting with Vs. 4; “He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” Think of the agape love shown here in this episode. Here he was, the Son of God, having received the spirit without measure, and he knew he was the Messiah and Lord and Master to his disciples. And yet he did not hesitate to teach his disciples a lesson in humility and kindness, by the use of a most humble act—washing the feet of his disciples. Perhaps this menial act impressed the lesson upon them far more than hours and hours of preaching. His agape love did not hesitate to use any means, no matter how humble, if only the disciples could be taught the important lesson of loving service to their fellow disciples. And surely we get the lesson too.

Peter, the zealous and impulsive disciple was well understood by our Lord, and even though Peter had showed great self-assurance and failed under great stress, Jesus had agape love for Peter. After our Lord’s resurrection the angel told the women to announce the resurrection of Jesus and “tell Peter too” the angel said. This was agape love for Peter, for no doubt he would feel uncertain of the Lord’s love for him after he had denied the Lord three times. After he had failed so miserably it is said that Peter wept bitterly. This was very significant, for a strong man like Peter perhaps was not given to tears easily; and his weeping showed how badly he felt over his fall. (Mark 16:7) In the 21st chapter of John, starting with Vs. 15, we find our Lord questioning Peter as to whether

Peter loved him; and the question was repeated three times, to correspond to the three times Peter had denied the Lord. Again we are confident that our Lord had agape love for Peter and he felt it necessary to impress the lesson upon Peter, for Peter was the impulsive type and needed to be strengthened in a more cautious attitude and more self-control and not be so self-confident. After the final question, Peter said, “Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.” In his agape love for Peter, our Lord knew it was not a good thing to let this pass without some kind of demonstration on the Lord’s part that he knew what Peter had done, and it was necessary for Peter’s character to affirm his love for the Lord three times, to match up with his denial of the Lord three times.

This reminds us of Peter’s boldness in taking our Lord aside and telling him that he shouldn’t be saying that “he would suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed.” Our Lord had agape love for Peter and spoke to him very sharply—“Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.” (We are quoting from Mark 8:33.) Peter did not know it, but he was putting a test upon our Lord, and our Lord promptly rejected any temptation to be disloyal to God’s will for him. And Peter needed to be reminded in no uncertain terms that he was speaking out of turn and needed to recognize Jesus as his Master and Lord, and he should not presume to tell Jesus what to say and do. How evident it is from a study of the conduct of Jesus toward his disciples, that agape love has many facets, and when necessary it can speak and act very decisively and even sharply. Our Lord, of course, had the spirit without measure and he knew when to speak sharply in agape love for others. We might not feel that sure of ourselves. Our Lord was dealing with men of different temperaments and he knew Peter needed special attention and special treatment to make a good disciple out of him. No doubt Jesus studied each one of his disciples and gave them just the right instruction and treatment that was needed. He was perfect in agape love and had that wisdom which cometh from above.

Now we shall direct our examination of agape love on the part of our Lord as he carried on his mission in dealing with the scribes and Pharisees. We find him acting entirely different toward these leaders. Yet we are confident that agape love was the inspiring motive. As Jesus himself said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” All his acts were in love to God, for he said himself that he was obedient to the Father and that is why the Father loved him. And as we are taught to love our enemies, it would not be supposable that Jesus, in opposing the scribes and Pharisees was acting and speaking maliciously, but in proper agape love to God.

John the Baptist gave an accurate preview of our Lord’s attitude toward Israel, even before our Lord began his ministry. We read from Matthew 3, Vs. 11 and 12: “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I,

whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” And Vs. 7 and 8 are significant too: John spoke to certain Pharisees and Sadducees who came to him for baptism: “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come: And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

And so our Lord was carrying out his mission in his agape love to God. He did not hesitate to speak the necessary words of condemnation of the leadership of Israel. All this was agape love to God. In the 11th chapter of Matthew we read: “Then began Jesus to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” And in the 24th verse we read, “But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee.” And then in agape love to his disciples and for his disciples he said “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.” (Vs. 25 and 26)

In the 12th chapter of Matthew we read of the disciples plucking corn to eat, and the Pharisees saw it and said to Jesus, “Behold thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.” We will not consider the full response of Jesus to this criticism, but note his final words, “But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.” He was reminding them of Hos. 6:6 which reads, “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” Jesus was saying that if they had learned that lesson of being merciful and not think that God was pleased with sacrifices instead, they would not have condemned his disciples. Jesus’ agape love drew lessons from the scriptures concerning proper conduct and he forcefully reminded these Pharisees that they were sadly lacking in being merciful and had their minds on sacrifices of animals, money, seeds, etc. Agape love is a very versatile quality. It can teach kindly, it can sacrifice for others, and where necessary it can rebuke and condemn—all depending upon the circumstances. And Jesus, in all that he did, in his whole lifetime was acting out agape love for God. He was obedient in everything that God outlined for him.

In the 12th chapter we find other encounters with the Pharisees. He healed a man with a withered arm and the Pharisees challenged him and Jesus’ reply was right to the point—he said they would not hesitate to rescue a sheep that had fallen into a pit: “How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.” He cast out a devil from a man that was blind and dumb, and the Pharisees, instead of

being happy to see this poor man relieved of his affliction, accused Jesus of casting out the devil “by Beelzebub the prince of devils.” (Vs. 24) Jesus said, “And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.” Jesus was filled with agape love to God and he did not hesitate to administer the necessary rebukes to the unfaithful leaders of Natural Israel. This was what God wanted him to do, and he did it. Jesus used the same strong language that was used by John the Baptist: “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” (Vs. 34)

The scribes and Pharisees said, “Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matt. 12:38-40) Does this sound harsh? It surely was, but it was necessary to rebuke the unfaithful leaders of Natural Israel and Jesus was faithful to God and acted out agape love to God in all that was supposed to be done.

We note a further rebuke to the Pharisees in chapter 22, starting with Vs. 15. We must take particular notice of their language for then we can understand why Jesus called them hypocrites. “Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man; for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us, therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?” They were hypocrites for they had just said that Jesus was true and teachest the way of God in truth; yet they were attempting “to entangle him in his talk.” Jesus, in his agape love to God rebuked their wickedness for it needed to be rebuked—they were false leaders of God’s people, natural Israel. Jesus was there to hold up God’s standard of righteousness and expose the falsity of the leaders.

Jesus was very blunt with the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection and who thought they could trap Jesus with a question—“Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for all [seven men] had her [in marriage].” “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.” Jesus did not hesitate to tell them plainly that they were ignorant as concerning the teachings of the scriptures. Jesus showed his agape love to God and for the truth and he always resisted those who were in error of belief or of conduct.

Continuing on in the 23rd chapter we read, “Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.” Here was Jesus, a very young man, standing up for what was right

and challenging the aged and revered leaders of natural Israel. He had an abundant measure of the Lord's spirit and his agape love to God inspired him to speak out boldly and pointedly. No wonder the multitude were "astonished at his doctrine." (Matt. 22:33)

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"—this expression is found in Vss. 13, 14 and 15, and in Vs. 16 he said "Woe unto you, ye blind guides." And in the 17th Vs. he said "Ye fools, and blind," and in the 19th Vs. he used the same phrase. And in the 24th Vs. he said, "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." This whole chapter is a scathing denunciation of the blind leaders. In his final words Jesus showed that he was deeply attached to natural Israel, and he was speaking harshly through necessity—he had agape love to God and must witness against unrighteousness, just the same as Jeremiah and other faithful prophets in the past had condemned unfaithful shepherds. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Jesus resorted to violent action and this is recorded in Mark 11:15-17, "and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves." Was this agape love to God? It surely was—Jesus was filled with reverence for the temple and he was angry with those who desecrated its holy precincts. And in John 2:13 to 17 we read: "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting; and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." This is a quote from Psalm 69:9, "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." Yes, this zeal was agape love for God, for his truth and his ways; and it surely did "eat him up," even to death on the cross.

Now we shall examine the activities of agape love as it applies to the body members of Christ. We will start out with some examples from the life of Paul. We turn now to the 20th chapter of Acts. Paul was sailing on his way to Jerusalem and there was a stopover at Miletus and he sent for the elders of Ephesus to come and see him as he had some important things to tell them. He reviewed his course of preaching the gospel faithfully

to the Jews and the Greeks, and now, he said, “I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there.” And then in his agape love to God and in his agape love for the Lord’s people he delivered a message of strong warning: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore, watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

The more we study this subject, the more we see the importance of realizing that there are many facets to agape love. There is agape love to God and the Truth and this necessitates loyalty and firmness; and in Paul’s case the necessity of informing the Lord’s people that there were disloyal men in their midst, men that would not hesitate to exert their influence to get a following just as soon as the restraining hand of Paul would be removed. Agape love is practical and is not weak but faces reality and is guided by the wisdom which is from above, “which is first pure, then peaceable.” Agape love is very definitely not peaceable when there is impurity, any violation of truth or principles of righteousness or loyalty to God.

An illustration of Paul being practical is recorded in Acts, 15th chapter beginning with Vs. 36. A proposal was made by Paul to Barnabas that they visit the brethren “in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.” Barnabas was determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them who remembered that this brother had “departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.” And the 39th Vs. reads as follows: “And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.” Barnabas would have been much wiser spiritually if he had showed proper respect for Paul’s judgment for Paul was an apostle and Barnabas was not. Paul in his agape love for the Lord’s people felt that John Mark would not be a blessing to the Lord’s people on this trip to visit the brethren. His agape love opposed Barnabas to the extent that the two did not go on the trip together as at first planned by Paul.

Paul seemed to be on a par with our Lord in standing up for truth and proper conduct. In Gal. 2nd chapter we read of Paul’s opposition toward Peter for showing fear in the presence of the Jews. Peter was eating with Gentiles and then when a few Jews showed up he “separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.” It is interesting to read Vs. 13 as rendered in the Diaglott: “And the other Jews also dissembled with him,

so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.” Paul judged rightly that this was a serious matter and so he challenged Peter right in the presence of them all; and we read the record beginning with Vs. 14: “But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Agape love is a powerful force, but unless we understand its operations we will fall far short and be delinquent in Christian conduct, and in a perpetual state of confusion. Agape love is firm in its loyalty to God and holds to the truth of the Gospel against all opposition. It is fully aware that the scriptures teach that there are false brethren and selfish men who will make merchandise of the Lord’s people and that deceit and honeyed words and actions will be employed to gain selfish ends. Agape love is wide awake and constantly alert.

We note for example the words of Paul in Rom. 16:17 and 18: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” The word “mark” means to look at or observe—take note of; and the word “avoid” means to shun. The word “avoid” is used only three times in the New Testament: Rom. 3:12, Rom. 16:17 and 1 Pet. 3:11. 1 Pet. 3:11 says “Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it.” To “eschew evil” can mean only one thing—to avoid it. So when the Apostle tells us to “avoid” them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; there is only one meaning that can be adduced and that is to not use them as guides or teachers. Is this agape-love conduct? It surely is for the truth of the gospel is precious; and doctrines can mean certain beliefs or certain courses of action. The Diaglott instead of using the word “belly” uses the word “appetite” and the thought would be that they are acting in such a way as to serve their own appetite for distinction and honor—they want a following. And when brethren act this way there is always a division, for the reason that those who love the truth—agape love of the truth—will not tolerate such conduct but will “mark” them and not use them as teachers.

Now we would like to consider the conduct of our Pastor in persistently and aggressively witnessing to the Truth and pointing out the inconsistencies of the creeds. When he appeared upon the scene, he was confronted with church creeds, thousands of ministers preaching these creeds and dozens of denominations, all claiming to be the true church

and yet holding teachings that contradicted one another and misrepresenting the plan and character of God. The Pastor was gradually coming to a knowledge of the truth and in his early days he called together the preachers in his own locality and presented the truth to them. The truth was rejected by all of these ministers; so what was he to do? He had a deep agape love for God and a deep agape love for the Truth and a deep agape love for the Lord's people. There was only one thing he could do and that was to circulate the truth far and wide. Then was fulfilled the symbolic prophecy of Rev. 14:6 and 7: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." And another prophecy was fulfilled at the same time—Rev. 14:8: "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." This was a part of the declaration of the Harvest Message as it was circulated over all the earth. And combined with this was the message recorded in Rev. 18:1, 2 and 4: "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Yes all this was fulfilled in the aggressive and persistent circulation of the truth by hundreds of the Lord's people all over the world. Was all this activity, this combativeness, this aggressive circulation of the truth an evidence of agape love? Most assuredly it was—agape love for God, agape love for the precious truth making the Bible understandable, agape love for those in Babylon who were mourning and who were rescued by the truth, and agape love in exposing and opposing errors that were misrepresenting God and confusing everyone, both in and out of the churches, turning many intelligent people away from God's Word. The Pastor was used in the same way that Jesus was—both were outside of the nominal system. Jesus said he could not put new wine in old wineskins, and our Pastor knew it was impossible to pour new truth into the old wineskins of church creeds. So both Jesus and the Pastor carried on their respective ministries outside of the Nominal Systems and called the worthy ones to come out and join the truth.

Apropos to this is a quote from the 1908 convention report, page 112 (Feb. 23 to Mar. 1) and our Pastor makes a statement during his debate with Elder White on the subject of Baptism. "But, notwithstanding my sympathy for them and my desire not to hurt their feelings, it is my duty to God, to the truth, to my opponent and the denomination which he represents in both wings [of the Christian or Disciple Church], and to my auditors this evening and to whomsoever the Lord may send my message, to tell the truth, the whole

truth and nothing but the truth on this subject, whose importance is recognized by all Christendom, and very particularly by my opponent and his church fellowship.”

There are times when some brethren give the impression that preaching the truth as our Pastor did during the Harvest, is somehow below the dignity of spirituality and holiness. But when we catch the thought that agape love has many facets and that an important facet of agape love is loyalty to God and the Truth and taking a delight in “showing forth God’s praises” and blessing others with a better knowledge where possible, then we attain to a better balance of Christian character, and see how necessary it is to be champions for the truth at all costs. One who has the spirit of the truth, true agape love will take care that he “speaks the truth in agape love.” (Eph. 4:15) One who is well developed in agape love, well balanced would not speak in any other way. Of course, we admit that we have the treasure of the new mind in these imperfect vessels and we have to “be transformed,” and learn to speak, not according to our old habits, but according to the lines of conduct laid out for us in the Lord’s Word.

And now we would like to touch upon a few points concerning the activity of agape love in the new commandment Jesus gave to his disciples: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye love one another.” (John 13:34) What did Jesus do in behalf of his disciples that he wanted us to copy? He taught his disciples, he exhorted them, and gave them correction. Now we have the New Testament giving us the words of our Lord and of the apostles for our guidance and our instruction. So we use these means to bless one another. And now that we are living in the Harvest time and have the precious ministry of the Pastor, we can really bless one another with the Truth. And we would do everything we could to be of assistance to one another, both temporally and spiritually. We can intelligently lay down our lives for one another.

Let us touch upon a few scriptures that are related to our agape love for one another. In 1 Pet. 1:22 we read, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” A pure heart would mean that there would be no adulteration in our hearts, no selfish motive in our doing things for one another—we would do nothing for gain for self. And “fervently” would mean that it was not done in a half-hearted manner, but with deep personal interest and that would continue through life.

This reminds us of an expression of our Pastor that we think has been misunderstood and misapplied. He said the “final test is love for the brethren.” This has been used to influence brethren to be lenient toward brethren who are bringing out teachings and practices contrary to the things we have learned and been assured of. If we look up the context in Bro. Russell’s writings we will find that he was not talking about teachers at all. Rather he was exhorting the brethren not to be proud and aloof, but be kind to all the

Lord's people, even though some of them might have weaknesses and failings that would be a trial to us. If we failed to love the brethren that have been accepted of the Lord, then we would be rejected because lacking in brotherly love. Think of Jesus for example—his disciples had faults and weaknesses but he continued to accept them as his disciples and worked with them to make them suitable to be his apostles. Surely Jesus set us a practical example of loving the brethren.

In Volume VI we have brought to our attention the high standard of love for the brethren. On page 297 is a quote from 1 Thess. 5:14, "Now we exhort, you brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all." This verse certainly makes clear that agape love is versatile, has many facets—it "warns", it "comforts," it "supports," and is "patient toward all."

Let us examine Heb. 10:24 and 25, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." This is a facet of agape love that is extremely important—to use our influence in every way we can to encourage one another in love and good works.

In John 17:17 we read a part of the last prayer of Jesus: "Sanctify them through the truth; thy word is truth." The tactic of Satan is to confuse our minds regarding the truth, so that we will not experience its sanctifying work. So we can see why it is necessary for agape love to oppose teachers who are bringing in errors that are contrary to the doctrines that we have learned and been assured of.

Let us consider briefly an example or two of error. We have studied and been assured that the explanation of the Jubilee is correct. Today we have some who attack this explanation and tell us that the Jubilee is when the Millennium is over. Agape love has regard for the explanations that seem so reasonable, and it opposes brethren who reject this explanation for something entirely different, and it refuses to recognize them as teachers. That reminds us that we must guard against the assumption that rejecting a brother as teacher is tantamount to rejecting him as a Christian brother—this simply is not true.

Take another example—some are making an issue over an organization, and unless you recognize and support a certain service organization you are given a cold shoulder and shunned for fellowship and service. Brethren who do this are to be marked and avoided, for they are fostering the spirit of division as mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:12 and 13: "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you; or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"

One more example—some are opposing the idea of accepting the Pastor as the one chosen of God to give us meat in due season and think it is profitable to study the

scriptures entirely aside from the use of our Pastor's writings. This is a serious mistake and agape love will act against such individuals whether they be brothers or sisters.

You remember at the beginning of our talk we quoted from the Pastor—an article on Reprint page 4479 (Sept. 15, 1909), wherein he said that “gentleness, meekness and patience are indeed elements of the holy character, the holy mind, which the Lord will develop in us: but they are not the sum of this character, which we call love. They are only twigs or branches, as it were on the great tree of Christian faith and fellowship—twigs and branches which are duplicated to some extent on other trees and on other vines than that of the Father's right hand planting.” Now cannot we see, when we consider the many and important facets of agape love, that these qualities of “gentleness, meekness and patience” are correctly called “twigs and branches,” rather than the large trunk of the tree of Christian character? And cannot we see that indeed they are not the sum of this character which we call love?

What did Jesus do in his love (agape) for God? Did he exercise only “gentleness, meekness and patience”? We know he was very firm for truth and righteousness and for God's will, and was intensely antagonistic toward the leaders of natural Israel—leaders who were false and needed to be exposed. We remember the course of Paul—he not only preached the truth of the gospel, but he was aggressive against those who would mislead the Lord's people, and even opposed Bro. Peter publicly, when Peter showed weakness one time. All this is agape love and can be accepted as such when we realize that love (agape) is versatile and has many facets.

And we remember our Pastor's circulation of millions of copies of the Bible Student Monthlies and how many of them were used to expose the false doctrines in the creeds and to show the beauty of the Truth in contrast. All this was love (agape) to God and love (agape) of the truth and love (agape) in behalf of the Lord's people.

“Gentleness, meekness and patience” truly have their place and are indispensable in the Christian character; but they are not represented in the solid and large trunk of the tree of Christian character. Agape love toward God means that we recognize justice, truth and righteousness as the foundation of a balanced Christian character. Upon this foundation we are to develop the other qualities of agape love—the foundation comes first—the trunk of the tree of Christian character; and then the twigs of Christian character come next. If we go at it in reverse order, we are in confusion and in deep trouble spiritually.

Peter gives us a picture of the structure of a Christian character. He does not picture it from the standpoint of obedience to the “two great commandments” plus the “new commandment”; neither does he picture it like our Pastor did as the solid trunk of a tree with branches and twigs. Rather he pictures it as having a faith foundation, and upon this foundation are certain qualities, with love at the very top or last. We read his description

in 2 Peter 1:5-7: “And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love.”

We call your attention to the Nov. 10th Manna—“The love of God, which the apostle is here describing as the spirit of the Lord’s people is a love which is far above selfishness, and is based upon fixed principles, which should, day by day, be more and more distinctly discerned, and always firmly adhered to at any cost.”

“Based upon FIXED principles”—this is quite a thought isn’t it? If this is true then our endeavor should be to discover and study these FIXED principles that we love properly and not be floundering around in our emotions, not knowing exactly what we are supposed to do. If FIXED principles are to guide us, then this must mean that our minds take hold of these principles, and we intelligently know at all times what we are doing and why. We will act in a certain way under certain circumstances, but if the circumstances are different we will act entirely different, because agape love has many facets.

For instance the Apostle Paul, in his important analysis of agape love ends up by saying “Agape beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” Does agape bear all things from false teachers? Does agape believe all things from false teachers? Does agape hope all things from false teachers? Does agape endure all things from false teachers? The description of agape love by Paul is entirely within the framework of the truth and love toward God and Christ and for the brethren. As to false teachers, agape love to God will oppose that which is wrong, that which is false, that which is contrary to truth. We have only to think of the example of Jesus and Paul to realize the truth of this statement; and our Pastor was a worthy example of all this.

On Reprint page 5368 we find an article entitled LOVING RULES AND PARLIAMENTARY RULES. In the course of this article we find these words: “Love, joy, peace, should prevail in every class. Everything tending toward these and in fullest harmony with loyalty toward God and his Word should be cherished.” It is important to notice that while “love, joy and peace should prevail in every class,” the Pastor adds these words, “Everything tending toward these and in fullest harmony with loyalty toward God and his Word should be cherished.” We should never forget there is something that must come first—“loyalty toward God and his Word.” On this basis, it is proper that “love, joy and peace” should follow, but not otherwise. “Love, joy and peace” of the proper kind, cannot exist if there is disloyalty toward God and his Word. If there is “love, joy and peace” in an atmosphere of disloyalty toward God and his Word, then we know such “love joy and peace” are delusive and a snare.

PUTTING ON LONG SUFFERING

(by M. L. Staples, 1909 Convention Report, page 208.)

This, indeed, dear brethren, comes in line with nine other characteristics. We want to notice that the Apostle in Gal. 5:19-23, enumerating the works of the flesh, he has run over about seventeen items, and then he closes with these words: "Such like things," showing you that on the one side there are so many ways that Satan has been able to manufacture and thrust upon the world in his great effort to sink roots of sin down deep into the human heart that the Apostle is unable to enumerate them all. On the other hand, we find enumerated in the twenty-second verse the fruits of the spirit, but it does not say *fruits*, but *fruit*. Fruits might mean different kinds; there are many kinds of works of the devil, but only one fruit of the Spirit. So here the Apostle, in order to identify the graces of the Spirit with the great I AM, whose name is Love, he says, "the fruit of the spirit is love;" that fruit is the capstone of all the graces of the Spirit, because God is Love. Then the Apostle continuing, illustrates, so to speak, this fruit with eight illustrations, of which long suffering is one: "Joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such [he does not say "such like things," as he does in connection with the works of the devil], against such there is no law."

We notice how our Heavenly Father, whose name is Love, exercises this great principle, *long suffering*—patient endurance. Has He manifested this to us? Yes, He has, in many ways. Even after father Adam had become an enemy of God, He allowed him [930] years still to breathe and to walk to and fro in the earth (not with God, however). And so the Apostle says, "Be followers of God as dear children." There are many ways in which we can exercise this principle. If a brother is weak, slow in progress, or in the understanding of the Word, we must have long suffering towards him as God does toward us... The fruits of the Spirit are on the Lord's side, and the works of the flesh on the devil's side.