Love.

By Professor the Rev. James Denney, D.D., Glasgow.

'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing' (1 Co 13^{1-3}).

The persons to whom these words were addressed were full of what may be called Christian ambitions. They coveted what they reckoned Christian gifts; the Church of Christ was for them a stage on which they aspired to be conspicuous figures. The Apostle has their correction in view when he writes, 'Covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.' It is literally a way in the superlative degree—*via maxime vialis*, as Bengel renders it—a way having in perfection all the qualities which ought to characterize a way; a way open to every one, unobstructed, leading straight to the goal of Christian greatness. This is the way of love which he proceeds to celebrate.

It has been finely remarked that the Apostle illustrates in his very first words the lesson he wishes to teach: 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love.' An unloving spirit would have said, 'Though you speak with the tongues of men and of angels,' and made the Corinthians, not himself, represent the bad example. The instinctive courtesy of the Apostle is inspired by love, and shows how thoroughly he himself has learned his lesson. The simplest way in which we can enter into his thought is to make clear to ourselves what the gifts are which are sometimes supposed to supersede love, but which really depend upon it for their value in the Church.

The gift of tongues was an emotional gift. It was an ecstasy of feeling by which men were carried away and broke into rapturous inarticulate utterances. The sublime realities of the Christian faith—God, Christ, the forgiveness of sins, the assurance of immortality—as they broke into the common life of man, disturbed its equilibrium profoundly. Nature rocked under the impact of the supernatural as a boat rocks on the water when a heavy weight is suddenly thrown into it. This emotional disturbance, though in some ways incalculable, seems always to have had one character. It was an ecstasy of praise. Those who were carried away by it uttered in this transport of feeling the wonderful works of God. What they expected when the impetus had subsided was an Amen at their giving of thanks. A modern musician has written songs without words: this is a very apt description for the peculiar kind of spiritual emotion called in the New Testament speaking with tongues. Probably the nearest approach to it most Christians make is when they are carried away by the feeling of a revival meeting. Many can still remember the revival of 1874, when Mr. Moody first came to this country. Like most revivals it lived in an atmosphere of praise: the first edition of Mr. Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos* came along with it, and the American Organ. Everybody sang these hymns and sang them everywhere. The largest churches and halls were crowded out for months by multitudes surrendering themselves to the emotion. The words and the tunes—perhaps in some cases the tunes even more than the words—sang themselves into people's ears, into their very nerves and brain. They heard the rhythm of them through the beating of machinery or the noisy traffic of the streets. They heard it as they sat over their Bibles at home. They felt like singing all the time. The church was full of men who floated, so to speak, on this wave of emotion; an unutterable joy in the redeeming love of God seemed to sustain their life; it was full, as they would have said in the early days, of people speaking with tongues.

This is an experience which many make light of and even deprecate; they do not speak with tongues, and they do not want to. But this is not how it is regarded by the Apostle. He knew as well as any modern moralist that the promise of the new emotion is not always fulfilled. He knew that the equilibrium of the old nature which had been momentarily disturbed by the sense of Christian realities was too easily restored at the old level, and that men who had spoken

with tongues might relapse and become 'sensual, not having the Spirit.' But in itself this emotional susceptibility to spiritual realities is good. 'I thank my God,' says the Apostle, 'that I speak with tongues more than you all'; I am more open than any of you to this access of feeling which rises to unintelligible rapture. No one who has had in a time of revival the experience described above, no one who feels his heart beat quicker and his sympathies kindle as the refrain of a gospel hymn takes possession of his ear and his soul, will disagree with him. But good as this emotional susceptibility is, gift of God as it is, it is not good if it terminates in itself. It is not good if a man boasts of it, and judges on the strength of it those whose experience he does not appreciate and cannot understand. The ecstatic praise which is exhausted in utterance, the feeling which is exhausted in being felt, is in one aspect a kind of self-indulgence. It cannot be the be-all and the end-all of the gospel. Taken by itself, it is no more than sounding brass or clanging cymbal, those deafening empty noises with which the Corinthians were familiar even in pagan worship. It is not the steam which is blown off with a loud noise, and is visible for a moment in dense white clouds, which drives the engine; it is the steam in the boiler, which is subject to intense pressure, and is neither heard nor seen. Thank God for every Christian emotion, the Apostle says, but ask earnestly, persistently, and devoutly how it is to tell for the common good. 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one *to profit withal*,' and the question on which everything turns is: What service is being done, by these prized exaltations of mine, to the Church which is the body of Christ? For what ministries of love do they furnish the driving power?

From emotional the Apostle advances to intellectual gifts: 'Though I have prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge.' I say 'advances' intentionally, for this is what he means. The uncontrollable emotion called speaking with tongues is no doubt a spiritual gift, when it is Christian realities which stimulate it, but it is the most elementary of spiritual gifts. It is the new life, indeed, but in a turbid semi-sensuous form—a form which is transcended when the Christian realities not only excite emotion but take possession of intelligence. It is not only inevitable but right that they should do so, and do it with decisive power. The world with Christ and redemption in it—the world in which the Son of God and the forgiveness of sins and eternal glory are real things—is another world. It makes another appeal to the intelligence, excites other reflexions, demands other interpretations, reveals other prospects. All former philosophies are cashiered when the realities of the Christian revelation come within the horizon of thought. The intellect which submits to the impact of the gospel receives a shock as startling and momentous as that which raises the emotions to ecstasy; the mind of man is born again under the supreme revelation of God. It gets an understanding of the world and of all God's ways with it and purposes in it undreamt of before. As St. Paul says here, it gets the gift of prophecy, and all mysteries and all knowledge are thrown open to it.

Probably no one ever had a more vivid experience of this than the writer of this Epistle. If any man ever had his mind born again and his world made new in a great experience it was he. The enthusiasm, the intoxication, as it has been called, of the great speculative geniuses like Plato and Spinoza who have tried to set this unintelligible world in an intelligible light before our eyes, is cold compared to the ardour with which Paul reconstructs his universe with Christ for its A and Ω, its principle and goal. 'In Him,' he has the exaltation of mind to write, 'were all things created, that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and in him all things are one.' The man who was capable of thinking and saying this did not undervalue the intellect and its use in the Christian life. He felt it essential even to his self-respect to have a Christian view of God and the world, a Christian philosophy or theology; he felt the value of being initiated into the ultimate truth, of seeing the world in divine Christian light —for that is what is meant by having 'prophecy, mysteries, and knowledge'; but he felt also that no attainments in this direction touched the centre any more than the emotional excitement of tongues Without love, to make the intellectual Christian the servant of the ignorant; without love, to keep the intellectual from being wise in his own conceit; without love, to check the intellectual when he is tempted to despise others, to restrain him when

he would use his power to intimidate others or to establish a selfish ascendency over them, knowledge is nothing. All mysteries may be open to a man —he may have the profoundest insight into the manifold wisdom of God—he may see the meaning, the methods, the issues of God's working in the world in a way which makes darkness light and crooked things straight; but without love, it does not count.

Most Christians, probably, at some time or other, have touched experimentally on speaking with tongues, but one cannot be so sure about prophecies and mysteries and knowledge. The daring of New Testament thought in its interpretation of all things in the light of Christ can hardly be said to survive in the Church. A great philosophical theologian, a man who could search with the light of revelation the world known to us as Paul searched and read with the same light the world known to his generation, is one of the crying wants of the time. What we have to lament is not that people overvalue knowledge in comparison with love, or that they set too much store on Christian insight into the meaning and purpose of the world, but that they have no interest at all in the intellectual construction and application of Christianity. Their minds have not been sufficiently stimulated by the Christian revelation to want any new view of the world in the light of it. But extremes meet, and the lesson of the Apostle at this point is curiously applicable to a kind of petrified intellectualism which is to be found in all churches. There are always those to whom Christianity is pre-eminently a kind of knowledge, a system of truth, or rather of truths. It means the truth of the Bible, or of the creed, or of some outline of Christian ideas on which they have been brought up. They have a zeal for this, and they are moved by what calls it in question as they are by nothing else. The ideal Christian for them is the defender of the faith, Mr. Valiant for the Truth. It does not perhaps occur to them that this is the type of intellectualism which is most likely to be loveless. But much as he admired the character, Bunyan knew its perils when he told how Mr. Valiant for the Truth was assailed by *Wildhead*, *Inconsiderate*, and *Pragmatical*. What a figure these rogues would cut in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. The curious thing is that the intellectual Christian, or rather the man who champions a truth which is no longer living but only in possession of legal authority, is apt to imagine that they are allies, not enemies, and that he can enlist them all to fight the Lord's battle. They are in reality the vices, and how often the unconsciously cherished vices, of the degenerate intellectual without love.

The Apostle becomes more venturesome and paradoxical as he goes on to ever higher gifts. 'Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.' Faith here is not used in the general sense of that trust in Jesus which makes a man a Christian; it is a specific spiritual gift operating not on the emotional, nor on the intellectual, but on the practical side of human nature. It is the gift which raises Christian efficiency to a high point. The consequences of inefficiency are so miserable and depressing that it is no wonder this gift is highly valued. What is of so much value to the Church as that it should have men in it who in spite of obstacles can do what needs to be done, not men who say what they ought to say, and then nothing happens, but men who positively achieve things, men who overcome the difficulties at which others helplessly gaze? If any one prized this practical Christian efficiency it was Paul, who was a conspicuous illustration of it himself, and who often sought it in vain in his associates, yet not even this is the vital thing in the Christian life. We can almost think that as he wrote these words about the power of faith Paul had in his mind, not only the saying of Jesus about bidding the mountain remove and be cast into the sea, but the solemn words at the close of the Sermon on the Mount: 'Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many mighty works?' It might well seem incomprehensible that spiritual powers should be wielded, and spiritual efficiency in a supreme degree exhibited, by men whom Jesus rejects; but Paul felt the truth that was in it, and so may we. The efficient man may lose himself in his very efficiency; the sense may steal upon his mind that *he* is the really powerful preacher, that his is the commanding personality to which reluctant circumstances yield, his the practical capacity which gets the belt upon the wheel and transmits force and sees that work is done; and when this happens, all is lost. For Christianity is not in this region of outward efficiency after all; it is in the soul. A man may

be a great Christian worker, as we say, and no saint. He may do distinguished service to the Church, and have neither part nor lot in the kingdom of God. He may be one of those who at their departure are celebrated, mourned, and honoured by the Church, but to whom the Lord says, I never knew you. These are terrible things to say, and to think, but when we are dealing with love, we are always on the verge of terrible things. What can be so terrible as to wound love, and how can love be wounded more terribly than by offering any doings or achievements as a substitute for it?

Emotional gifts, intellectual gifts, practical gifts, all are vain without love. Even the gift which most nearly counterfeits love is vain also. 'Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.' There, we might say again, are the very things we can conceive the Apostle doing himself; he was always forward to care for the poor; he died daily at his work. Certainly he did not undervalue the capacity for sacrifice or the practice of it; but he is putting an extreme case, and where sacrifice, even the utmost, is made (as it may conceivably be made) from ostentation or ambition, it profits nothing. There might even be a rivalry in philanthropy: who could think that the life of Christianity lay there?

And so we are driven back by the Apostle to the more excellent way—the way which *is* a way, and along which we can really make Christian progress. Emotion has its value when excited by Christian realities—so has intellect—so has energy—so has sacrifice; but the one thing needful is love. It is only when love rules the use of gifts, and indeed compels us to use them for the common good, that they can properly be called Christian. And what is love? A great theologian has defined it as the identification of ourselves with God's interest in others. God *has* an interest in others. There is something in all men which is dear to Him, to which His love is pledged, which it would grieve Him to see injured or frustrated. Do we realize this, and that the question whether we love or not can only be answered in the light of it? Do we realize it in regard to those who are nearest and dearest to us—our brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters? Do we realize it in regard to those who are members of the same congregation with us, or of the same social circle? Is there anything in our life which would not be there but for the sense we have of God's interest in others? Could we point to any one to whom we have ever shown the kindness of God for Jesus' sake? This is the only thing which is love in the Christian sense of the term. It is by this the Church and the Christian live, and without it they die. To identify ourselves with God's interest in the lives of others, to seek that God's will for them may be fulfilled, that that which is dear to Him in them may be saved, to put what we are and have unselfishly at their service for this end: this is love. Is there any such good thing found in us toward God and those who are dear to Him?

Now what the theologian defined, the Apostle describes. He pictures for us in a glow of enthusiasm the modes in which love manifests itself in a world like ours. No doubt when he wrote his description of love he had in his mind those phenomena in the Corinthian Church which made its absence sensible, but the same phenomena are always reappearing, and we find the key to his picture nearer home. 'Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.' Is there anything in us, when the contemplation of this picture has made us penitent, which can claim any kinship with it? It is not our likeness, we know that; but is there something in us which draws us inevitably and instinctively towards it, which makes us feel that it should be our likeness, and that it would be, if we yielded to the constraint of the love of God? If there is even this that remains, let us strengthen it and not suffer it to die. The greatest part of our perfection, as Robert Bruce says, is to thirst for perfection—to look on this picture with humble longing hearts till we begin to grow like it.

But we ought not to say, 'to look on this picture.' For what the theologian defines and the Apostle depicts is illustrated and embodied in our Lord Himself, and what we have to do is to look at Him. 'Herein is love.' We do not know what love is till we see it in Jesus, and when we see it there we see Him identifying Himself with God's interest in us. The revelation is not only

made before our eyes, it is made with special reference to ourselves. In Christ's presence we are not the spectators of love only, we are its objects. Christ exhibits towards men, He exhibits towards us, that wonderful goodness which Paul describes. When we think what our life has been, and what has been His attitude to us from first to last, do we not say, 'Our Lord suffers long, and is kind; He is not easily provoked; He does not impute to us our evil. Where we are concerned, where God's interest in us is concerned, He bears all things, He believes all things, He hopes all things, He endures all things'? These are the thoughts, or rather these are the experiences, out of which love is born in our hearts. We love, because He first loved us. All the time it is His love which must inspire ours. 'Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.'

Theology and History.

By Professor the Rev. J. G. Tasker, D.D., Handsworth College, Birmingham.

At the last Congress of Historians, held in Berlin, the demand for the secularization of historical research found expression. In the name of Science it was urged that the solution of the problems of history would be hastened by the elimination of the factor, God. In his Rectoral Address,[1] Professor Erich Schaeder, of Kiel, essays to answer the question suggested by the utterances of some of the Berlin *savants*: 'Is it possible to understand history without God?' The secularization of history would mean, as he rightly perceives, the opening of a great gulf between theology and history. For it is on the manifestations of God in history, and especially on the historical revelation of God in Christ, that the vitality of theology depends.

The gravity of the issues raised by the claim advanced in the interests of the science of history is manifest. Of this fact Professor Schaeder's timely and impressive address will convince all its readers; it will also, we venture to think, prove that the claim cannot be allowed, and that the reasons for its rejection are scientific. Into its terse sentences so much thought is packed that it is difficult to summarize the argument without doing injustice to it. An attempt will, however, be made to indicate the strategic points in this powerful apologetic.

Many so-called theologies, we are reminded at the outset, are not theology at all. Theology proper is more than the conviction that theology is necessary, and more than the wish for a theology. The desire for a theology may be awakened by studying states of consciousness and by reflecting on the judgments of conscience. But as theology cannot be reduced to metaphysical speculation which infers the existence of the Absolute from a contemplation of the world-process, so neither can theology be discovered by searching in the depths of one's own soul for the mystical connexion of the individual life with an incomprehensible, vaguely defined Universal Life. Theology finds evidences of the action of the Living God in the objective domain of history; that is to say, in history which is definitely and indissolubly linked with the course of Nature. Theology finds that God is a reality in the region where reality is accessible to all. Not that God is brought in as a last resort and postulated as an explanation when finite causes are insufficient, but that historical study confronts us with facts and series of facts, of whose origin, course, and effects thought can give no rational account apart from God.

Nevertheless, Professor Schaeder is not surprised that in scientific circles there has arisen a demand for the secularization of history. As a scientific theologian he remembers that the thought of God has sometimes acted as a restraint on the legitimate inquiries of the scientific historian. Men's own share in the direction of the course of events may be underestimated or neglected, when undue prominence is given to the Divine factor. For example, the theory of the verbal inspiration of Holy Scriptures exerted a detrimental influence on the study of the Bible as literature. In fairness

[1] *Theologie und Geschichte.* Rede beim Antritt des Rektorats der Königlichen Christian-Albrechts-Universität, gehalten von Professor Erich Schaeder, 1909. Kiel: Lipsius und Tischer.