

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

THE GEORGE DANA BOARDMAN LECTURESHIP
IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS

VI

JESUS ON LOVE TO GOD

JESUS ON LOVE TO MAN

BY

REV. JAMES MOFFATT, D.D., D.LITT.

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Jesus on love to God

The George Dana Boardman Lectureship in Christian Ethics

(Founded Anno Domini 1899)



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Jesus on Love to God
Jesus on Love to Man

Two Lectures
delivered before the
University of Pennsylvania
March 27 and 28, 1922

By

REV. JAMES MOFFATT, D.D., D.Litt.

EDUCATOR, AUTHOR, AND TRANSLATOR OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY IN THE UNITED FREE CHURCH
COLLEGE OF GLASGOW, SCOTLAND



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THE FOUNDATION.



ON June 6, 1899, the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania accepted from the Rev. George Dana Boardman, D.D., LL.D., and his wife a Deed of Gift, providing for a foundation to be known as "The Boardman Lectureship in Christian Ethics," the income of the fund to be expended solely for the purposes of the Trust. Dr. Boardman served the University for twenty-three years as Trustee, for a time as Chaplain, and often as Ethical Lecturer. After provision for refunding out of the said income, any depreciation which might occur in the capital sum, the remainder is to be expended in procuring the delivery in each year at the University of Pennsylvania, of one or more lectures on Christian Ethics from the standpoint of the life, example and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the publication in book form, of the said lecture or lectures within four months of the completion of their delivery. The volume in which they are printed shall always have in its forefront a printed statement of the history, the outline and terms of the Foundation.

On July 6, 1899, a Standing Committee on "The Boardman Lectureship in Christian Ethics" was constituted, to which shall be committed the nominations of the lecturers and the publication of the lectures in accordance with the Trust.

On February 6, 1900, on recommendation of this committee, the Rev. George Dana Boardman, D.D., LL.D., was appointed Lecturer on Christian Ethics on the Boardman Foundation for the current year.

THE OUTLINE.

I. THE PURPOSE.

FIRST, the purpose is not to trace the history of the various ethical theories; this is already admirably done in our own noble University. Nor is it the purpose to teach theology, whether natural, Biblical, or ecclesiastical. But the purpose of this Lecture-ship is to teach *Christian Ethics*; that is to say, the practical application of the precepts and behavior of JESUS CHRIST to everyday life.

And this is the greatest of the sciences. It is a great thing to know astronomy; for it is the science of mighty orbs, stupendous distances, majestic adjustments in time and space. It is a great thing to know biology; for it is the science of living organisms—of starting, growth, health, movements, life itself. It is a great thing to know law; for it is the science of legislation, government, equity, civilization. It is a great thing to know philosophy; for it is the science of men and things. It is a great thing to know theology; for it is the science of God. But what avails it to know everything in space from atom

to star, everything in time from protoplasm to Deity, if we do not know how to manage ourselves amid the complex, delicate, ever-varying duties of daily life? What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world—the world geographical, commercial, political, intellectual, and after all lose his own soul? What can a University give in exchange for a Christlike character? Thus it is that ethics is the science of sciences. Very significant is the motto of our own noble University—*“Literæ Sine Moribus Vanæ.”*

And Jesus of Nazareth is the supreme ethical authority. When we come to receive from him our final awards, he will not ask, “What was your theory of atoms? What did you think about evolution? What was your doctrine of atonement? What was your mode of baptism?” But he will ask, “What did you do with Me? Did you accept Me as your personal standard of character? Were you a practical everyday Christian?” Christian Ethics will be the judgment test.

✓ In sum, the purpose of this Lectureship in Christian Ethics is to build up human character after the model of Jesus Christ’s.

II. RANGE OF THE LECTURESHIP.

Secondly, the Range of the Lectureship. This range should be as wide as human society itself. The following is offered in way of general outline and suggestive hints, each hint being of course but a specific or technical illustration growing out of some vaster underlying Principle.

1. *Man's Heart-Nature*.—And, first, man's religious nature. For example: *Christian* (not merely ethical) precepts concerning man's capacity for religion; worship; communion; divineness; immortality; duty of religious observances; the Beatitudes; in brief, Manliness in Christ.

2. *Man's Mind-Nature*.—Secondly, man's intellect-nature. For example: *Christian* precepts concerning reason; imagination; invention; æsthetics; language, whether spoken, written, sung, builded, painted, chiseled, acted, etc.

3. *Man's Society-Nature*.—Thirdly, man's society-nature. For example:

(a) *Christian* precepts concerning the personal life; for instance: conscientiousness, honesty, truthfulness, charity, chastity, courage, independence, chivalry, patience, altruism, etc.

(b) *Christian* precepts concerning the family life; for instance: marriage; divorce; duties of

husbands, wives, parents, children, kindred, servants; place of woman, etc.

(c) *Christian* precepts concerning the business life; for instance: rights of labor; rights of capital; right of pecuniary independence; living within means; life insurance; keeping morally accurate accounts; endorsing; borrowing; prompt liquidation; sacredness of trust-funds, personal and corporate; individual moral responsibility of directors and officers; trust-combinations; strikes; boycotting; limits of speculation; profiting by ambiguities; single tax; nationalization of property, etc.

(d) *Christian* precepts concerning the civic life; for instance: responsibilities of citizenship; elective franchise; obligations of office; class-legislation; legal oaths; custom-house conscience; sumptuary laws; public institutions, whether educational, ameliorative, or reformatory; function of money; standard of money; public credit; civic reforms; caucuses, etc.

(e) *Christian* precepts concerning the international life; for instance: treaties; diplomacy; war; arbitration; disarmament; tariff; reciprocity; mankind, etc.

(f) *Christian* precepts concerning the eccle-

siastical life; for instance: sectarianism; comity in mission fields; co-operation; unification of Christendom, etc.

(g) *Christian* precepts concerning the academic life; for instance: literary and scientific ideals; professional standards of morality; function of the press; copyrights; obligations of scholarship, etc.

In sum, *Christian* precepts concerning the tremendous problems of sociology, present and future.

Not that all the lecturers must agree at every point; often there are genuine cases of conscience, or reasonable doubt, in which a good deal can be justly said on both sides. The supreme point is this: Whatever the topic may be, the lecturer must discuss it conscientiously, in light of Christ's own teachings and character; and so awaken the consciences of his listeners, making their moral sense more acute.

4. *Man's Body-Nature*.—Fourthly, man's body-nature. For example: *Christian* precepts concerning environment; heredity; health; cleanliness; temperance; self-control; athletics; public hygiene; tenement-houses; prophylactics; the five senses; treatment of animals, etc.

In sum, the range of topics for this Lectureship in Christian Ethics should include whatever tends to society-building, or perfectionation of personal character in Christ. Surely here is material enough, and this without any need of duplication, for centuries to come.

III. SPIRIT OF THE LECTURESHIP.

Thirdly, the Spirit of this Lectureship. Every lecture must be presented from the standpoint of Jesus Christ. It must be distinctly understood, and the founder of the Lectureship cannot emphasize the point too strongly, that every lecture in these successive courses must be unambiguously Christian; that is, from the viewpoint of the divine Son of Mary. This Lectureship must be something more than a lectureship in moral philosophy, or in church theology; it must be a lectureship in Christian morality, or practical ethics from the standpoint of Christ's own personal character, example, and teachings.

IV. QUALIFICATION OF THE LECTURER.

Fourthly, the Qualification for the lecturer. The founder hopes that the lecturer may often be, perhaps generally, a layman; for instance: a

merchant, a banker, a lawyer, a statesman, a physician, a scientist, a professor, an artist, a craftsman; for Christian ethics is a matter of daily practical life rather than of metaphysical theology. The founder cares not what the ecclesiastical connection of the lecturer may be; whether a Baptist or an Episcopalian, a Quaker or a Latinist; for Christian ethics as Christ's behavior is not a matter of ecclesiastical ordination or of sect. The only pivotal condition of the Lectureship in this particular is this: The lecturer himself must be unconditionally loyal to our only King, our Lord Jesus Christ; for Jesus Christ himself is the world's true, everlasting Ethics.

Addresses by Rev. James Moffatt, D.D., D.Litt., at
the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.,
March 27th and 28th, 1922, at 8.15 P.M.

I. JESUS ON LOVE TO GOD.



THE first person to raise the question, whether it was possible to love God, was not a saint but a philosopher. There have been philosopher-saints; no one can deny that who remembers a thinker like Spinoza. But the saintly type and the philosophical type are generally apart, and the one analyses where the other is content with intuitions. It is not the saint, it is the philosopher, who attempts to argue about the possibility and justification of loving God, and we are not surprised to discover that the earliest thinker who faced this as a problem was Aristotle, or at any rate one of Aristotle's school, the philosopher to whom we owe the *Magna Moralia*, an ethical treatise of the fourth century B. C. We open that treatise, only to find that the writer is sceptical, if not negative. If love or friendship rests upon mutual pleasure, he argues, then the relationship between God and man is too unequal to permit of man

loving the deity. No doubt, he observes, some people do think that friendship with God is possible. "But they are wrong. Our view is that friendship cannot exist except where there is some return of affection. Now friendship towards God does not allow of love being returned; indeed it does not permit loving at all. For it would be absurd to say that a person loved Zeus." However, not all of Aristotle's school took so uncompromising an attitude. For example, the Aristotelian who afterwards compiled the *Eudemian Ethics* evidently regarded religious love as to some extent possible. His tone is more religious here and there than that of his master or of his predecessors. For him, the love of man towards God may be ranked as friendship between an inferior and a superior, as between son and father. In such cases, "there is not at all, or at least not in equal degree, the return of love for love. For it would be ridiculous to accuse God because the love one receives in return from him is not equal to the love accorded him." This exactly reverses the ordinary view of the religious man, who humbly assumes that his love to God is never equal to God's love for him. But the Aristotelian, resting love upon virtue, and interpreting it as

the relation between a subordinate and a superior, looks upon God primarily as a benefactor and lord; from this he deduces the inference that it would be preposterous to expect a condescension in the divine nature which would even equal the deferential affection shown by man upon the lower plane of humanity. The nearest analogy to this point of view is furnished by the famous aphorism of Spinoza, which delighted Goethe with its emphasis upon disinterested love: "He who loves God cannot expect God to love him in return." But Spinoza was driven to this by his conception of love, which in his view implied affections of joy and sorrow; and Deity must be exempt from such passions.

Jesus breathed a very different atmosphere. He inherited the simple intuitions of Jewish religion, where the soul loved God instinctively, without asking why. In Israel the human heart loved the God who had been revealed in history and experience as a God whose favour and fellowship were best expressed by some term like "love." God, in the Old Testament, especially in the later phases, is loving, fatherly, and kind; he is loved as he is loveable. It is true that before a book like Deuteronomy there are extremely

few cases of love being used to denote the relation of Israelites to God. There are only two which are beyond question, and both imply national loyalty. Thus God is described in Exodus xx. 6 as one who shows *mercy to thousands of those that love me and keep my commandments*, and at the end of the war-cry in Judges v. 31 Deborah cries: *let those who love Yahweh be as the sun rising in its strength*. To love God is the ethical loyalty of His people to His cause—an important feature to keep in mind, as we pass forward into the teaching of Jesus. And it is significant that in the finest Jewish teaching the words of the war-song are interpreted passively. The Mishna tells us: “those who are humiliated without humiliating others, those who listen to abuse of themselves without retaliating, those who act from love and rejoice in suffering, to them the word applies: *those who love God are like the sun going forth in his strength*.” Again, as we shall see, this tallies with a new emphasis laid by Jesus upon the mutual expression of love. Meantime, however, we notice that when Christianity began, it breathed this atmosphere of instinctive truth and affection towards God, in which as yet the cool analysis of philosophy had no place.

In the teaching of Jesus, as recorded by the first three gospels—our primary source—there is more of the spirit than of the letter of this love to God. Jesus never speaks directly of God's love for men, and although he does bid men love God, "love" is not the only, not even the supreme word in his religious vocabulary. The reasons for this we shall examine in a moment. Meantime, let us survey the materials. There are four distinct allusions to man's love for God or for Jesus himself, and then there is his re-issue of the Old Testament injunction to love God.]

Within the higher reaches of rabbinic piety, as already in the later Judaism reflected by a psalm like the hundred-and-nineteenth, love for God became increasingly love for the Torah. *Oh, how love I thy Law!* Such love is the supreme religious and moral duty, for in the Torah God is manifested as loveable and near and wise. In the teaching of Jesus a similar spirit may be felt. Man's chief end is indeed love to God, but this, his highest good, is love for God's truth and purpose, a devotion to Him which is not actuated by a sense of what we can get from Him but by a consciousness of Him as the reality of life and by a loyalty to His interests. The controlling

thought is personal reverence and absorption in His cause for His sake.

Twice, and only twice, does Jesus ever mention love to God. First, in a denunciation of the Pharisees (Luke xi. 42). *Woe to you Pharisees! You tithe the mint and rue and every vegetable, but justice and the love of God you disregard.* The collocation of justice and love to God here reminds us of the noble saying of the prophet Micah, who asked, *what doth the Lord require of thee but to do what is just, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* What Jesus is criticising is not so much the punctilious attention to ritual details as an unscrupulous neglect of the real essentials of religion. The Pharisees were extending and ramifying the law of tithes till it covered every vegetable and plant in the garden, and in so doing were losing sight of the central demand of God upon the ethical and religious conscience. The outward practices of religion were unduly encroaching on the inward. The point made by Jesus is that people cannot hope to win God's favour by such efforts. Goodness of the real kind excludes any such pretentious and scrupulous claims upon the score of ritual precision. Jesus in fact had repeatedly to meet and check

two forms of misguided anxiety, one (as here) about the ritual details of religion, the other about worldly fortune and faring. Both conflict with genuine love to God, even the former for all its religious colouring. A true devotion of the heart to God is not incompatible with strictness in religious observances. Nevertheless the latter is apt to overshadow the former and, unless one is very careful, to throw it out of focus by an overdue emphasis upon external affairs.

The second passage about love to God occurs in the Sermon on the Mount:

*No man can serve two masters:
either he will hate one and love the other,
or else he will stand by the one and despise the other—
you cannot serve both God and Mammon.*

Love to God is evidently service of God; this is implied, as indeed it is implied or urged everywhere by Jesus. For in studying his teaching about the duties of men to their heavenly Father we need to recollect that in Oriental life the relation of son to father included an element of service; the son was naturally engaged in the business and employment of his father. So God's sons

are to show their love by a dutiful life. Such a devotion, Jesus further implies, is a matter of choice, and it must be single-minded, if it is to be real.

Twice again Jesus mentions love for himself as God's representative. In his heroic demand upon his followers, he declares:

*He who loves father or mother more than me
is not worthy of me;
he who loves son or daughter more than me
is not worthy of me:
he who will not take up his cross and follow after me
is not worthy of me.*

The claim here again is for a devotion to himself for the sake of his cause. He claims a personal devotion which is serious and manly, alive to the interests which lay nearest to His own heart. It is love conceived as loyalty. The other allusion is in the story of the woman who was a sinner in the city, and who, touched by his words on repentance, made her way into the Pharisee's house to lavish homage upon him. She showed her love because she felt forgiven. And Jesus publicly ratifies her pardon. *Many as her sins are, they are forgiven, for her love is great.* Her

humble and adoring expression of love proved to Jesus that she had honestly repented, and virtually he tells the Pharisee that love of this kind is supremely valuable. This is the one allusion to love in connexion with penitence and forgiveness, and on this account it is specially important. Jesus in the name and power of God had by his words moved this poor creature to break with her sin; his graciousness had wakened her affection and trust, and in this Jesus sees her right to be pardoned. "Her sins were many, just because she loved much—too much," as Father Tyrrell observes. "It is usually the same gift which damns or saves us, according as it is ill or well used." Her passionate affection is purified and redeemed by Jesus. And yet we notice that at the end he speaks of her faith, not of her love: *your faith has saved you, go in peace.*

For it is faith, rather than love, which expresses for Jesus the normal attitude of man to God. But before noting the significance of this, we must recall how Jesus defined the essence of religion upon the lines of the Old Testament. The chief command, he said, was: "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is our Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole*

soul, with your whole mind, and with your whole strength. The second is this: *You must love your neighbour as yourself.*" Jesus here is simplifying religion, disentangling its essence from a mass of secondary details and duties; he gives a unity to the religious life. And, as he implies by uniting the two commands, love to God is to be shown in the concrete realities of life; it is not a detached affection which sits loose to the relationships and responsibilities of existence, but an emotion which finds expression in the human sphere in which God has placed us.

Such are the explicit references to love for God in the teaching of Jesus. Why, we ask, are they so rare? Because he could assume this as an element in the religious experience of his contemporaries? Perhaps. But the real explanation lies deeper. Jesus preferred "faith" to "love" as the expression of man's relation to God. "Love" does not necessarily emphasize the moral reverence and humility which for Jesus is essential in the tie between men and God. Love to God, as he teaches, is shown by faith, which often means moral courage, and always implies dutiful service. Note that Jesus speaks of faith in God and love towards man. In the

simple, direct language of the Old Testament, in which he had been trained, he can speak of love to God and to one's neighbour. But his characteristic language is that of confidence or faith in the Father's love and care. And one reason for this preference is that God reveals His personal demands and nature in human relationships, so that our love to Him is most adequately exercised and expressed by a fulfilment of our love to our fellows. ✓

II. JESUS ON LOVE TO MAN.

This opens up naturally into the question of man's love for man, about which Jesus has most to say.

The second command, he insists, is: *love your neighbour as yourself*. ✓ Jesus presupposes a naive and natural self-love. The value and joy of personal life is first learned by us from ourselves. Sympathy, help, service—these imply that we know what it is to have joy and to suffer pain. Love of self, in the sense of a supreme estimate of human personality, has a moral value. Those who appreciate the responsibility as well as the joy of possessing personality as a trust from God are initiated by their experience into a moral

attitude toward their fellows. *Whatever you would like men to do to you, do just the same to them*, Jesus teaches; *that is the meaning of the Law and the prophets*. It is not quite accurate to say that this positive form of the Golden Rule was entirely unknown to the Judaism of the day; but Jesus made it prominent as no one yet had done. Indeed, even within the later church there was a tendency to relapse upon the negative form, which he transcended. However, the immediate point for us is that this maxim reiterates the demand for an appreciation of one's self as a moral and spiritual personality.

The importance of this lies in the fact that such love of one's self involves self-respect and a careful safeguarding of personality. To love one's self means a refusal to waste or neglect one's powers of mind and body. But it carries with it more than this ethical self-preservation; it suggests the moral limitations of love. Brotherly love, as Jesus taught, issues in a readiness to sacrifice one's self for others. Yet there are sacrifices which one has no right to expect from others, and which one has no right to make. Love means a supreme sense of ethical values. It cannot sacrifice itself at the expense of its own

worth. For example, the problem raised by Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure* has often to be met in less tragic forms. Or, the danger which Balzac painted in *Père Goriot*—the danger of allowing love to make foolish sacrifices which really tend to spoil the object of one's love. We dare not, as we value ourselves, put happiness before moral ends, nor have we any business to make sacrifices of honour and honesty which impair the higher claims of goodness.

With regard to the sphere of this brotherly love, Jesus has two words to say. It embraces our *neighbour*, that is, our fellow-man. In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus teaches that this brotherly love is not to be confined to the circle of those who are kin and kind to ourselves, nor even to the circle of those who share our nationality or our faith. Need, even in a heretic or a foreigner, claims helpful love from a Christian, the love that does what it can.

Then your "neighbour" may be, or he may become, your "enemy." *You have heard the saying, "You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.* The "enemy" is

anyone who injures or maligns us, any one in our group who slanders or insults us. Jesus has in mind the private animosities which embittered life as he knew it among the peasantry and common folk. It is not the clash of armies but the strife of tongues, the slander and petty attacks which make life sore and hard, social feuds and enmities. Injuries of this kind raise either resentment or retaliation, sometimes both. Jesus demands a different attitude. He looks for a spirit of steady patience, which will make allowances. Affronts and insults and injuries are apt to create in us a disposition at least to hold aloof from those who misbehave towards us. Our wounded feelings are prone to prompt retaliation, if opportunity offers. Jesus says, *pray* for such unmannerly people. Why? Partly because prayer means that we do not make ourselves the judges as well as the victims; prayer helps to deliver us from that atmosphere of wounded self-love in which the sense of our personal importance tends to exaggerate offences. But his method of prayer for such persons is intended to produce yet another result. Why are we bidden to pray for them? That they may stop hurting us? Not primarily. It is that they may come to realize the harm they

are doing to themselves as well as to us, that they may regain their true position towards God. For Christian love means, as it has been said, devotion to the ends of God in human personality; it is a steady sense of the capacities and possibilities in human life. When we love our enemies, we do not love them as deliberate invaders of our rights, or in the rôle of those who injure our personalities. Indeed we are bound, in self-defence, to resent such attacks and resist such invasions of our purity and honour. No, we "love" them in the sense that we still believe in them, even though they may, for the time being, have lost their self-respect. We decline to regard them as objects of criticism or loathing. Still they are God's creatures, and no amount of ill-treatment must provoke us into treating them as hopeless or viewing them with enmity and aversion.

Such is the dauntless "love" which Jesus claims—not an emotion, not a blind, amiable refusal to face the facts, but an attitude to our fellows which enables us to honour them, in spite of everything, to believe in them even when they do not believe in themselves, to help them to fulfill the divine ends of life. Our relationship

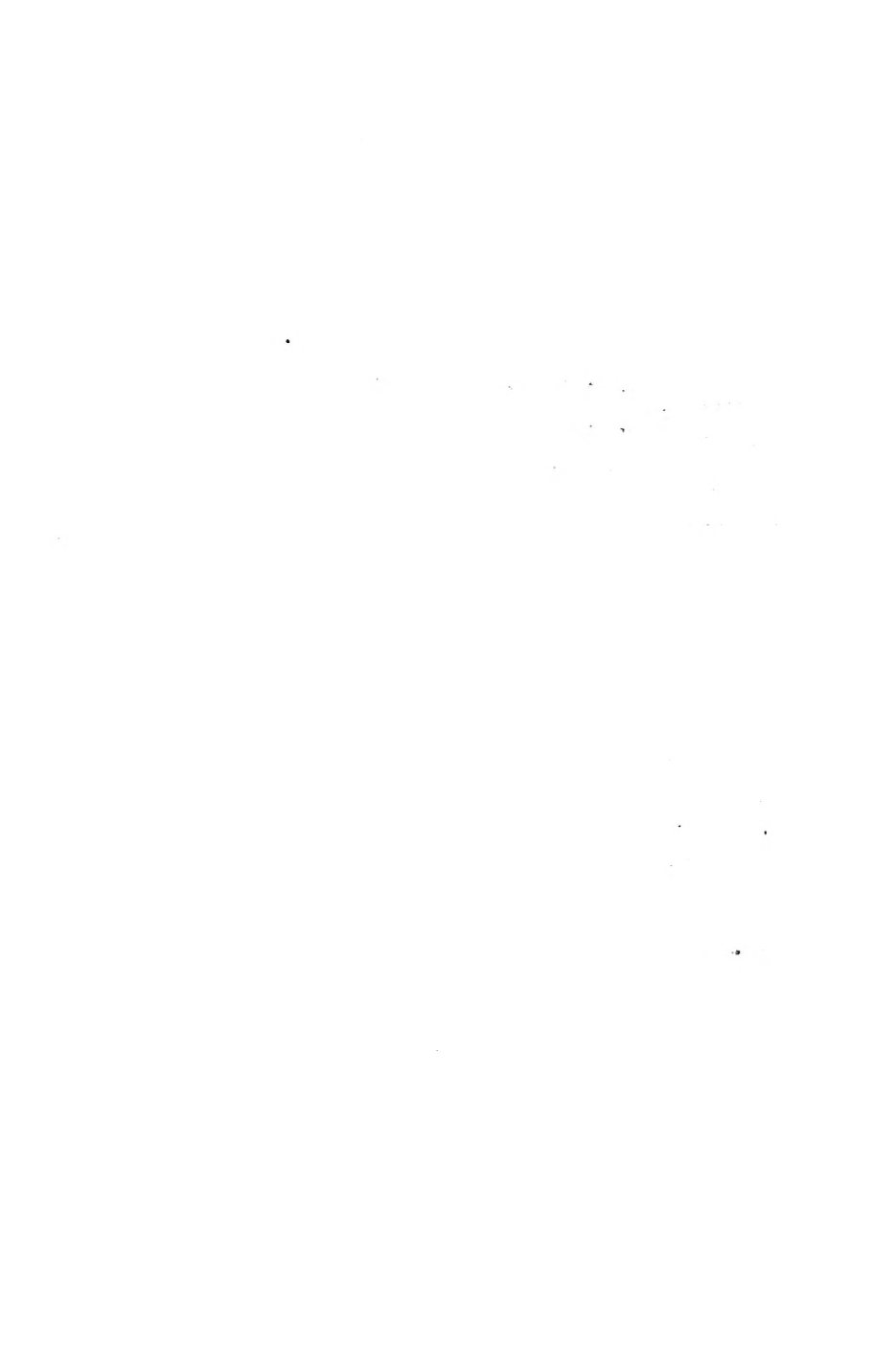
with them must be dominated by this temper, if it is to be really Christian. Such love is not indiscriminate affability; it is keenly alive to the high moral ends of life, and will upon occasion use discipline and severity to waken others to them, since this may be the truest kindness. In the teaching of Jesus, brotherly love, which must not flinch nor falter, implies the recognition of God's will in our relationships and responsibilities; it means that we believe every personality in our circle has some place and value for God, and that we are intended to further such ends of God in man, no matter how they treat us. To love others is to forward their highest interests; it is to be alive, and to make them alive, to the full possibilities of their life under the will of God our common Father.

The working out of this supreme duty involves much thought and care; it is a mental as well as a moral discipline for us. It is passive and active; it takes the initiative in forgiveness, in charity, in training, in all forms of social service. At the root of it lies a steady reverence for human personality, which abjures cynicism and selfishness at every turn. The application of the principle is far-reaching in every sphere of human

relationship. This is no place to analyse or even to indicate them. What is relevant is to emphasise the central and uncompromising demand of a Jesus upon his followers for brotherly love in the practical thoughtful sense which we have sought to define or describe. It is the reflex and accompaniment of our love to God, a religious attitude. For the God whom we love and serve is revealed mainly in human nature, as Jesus teaches; his will meets us as we live together and there the second commandment, which is like the first, encounters us from day to day.

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