LOVE

THE MAJESTIC GATEWAY OF LIFE



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If I have not love, I am like a noisy gong. 1 Corinthians chapter 13 is one of the strongest statements on love that exists anywhere in religious literature. This chapter for me is the essence of why the early church grew and flourished. They saw and experienced the presence of Christ in Paul's leadership and life.

My friend, Albert Noradunkian, has captured the need to move away from rules and regulation and to see Christian faith as a matter of love and practice. To follow dogmas and customs is easy, to love our neighbour as ourselves is hard. It is easier to judge than to love.

Coming from Armenia, and influenced by its rich history and literature, Albert brings a different set of eyes to scripture than those of us who grew up in North America. His meditations on the nature of love, price, virtue, envy and patience offer unique insights.

I read somewhere that a person's image of God usually says more about the person than about God. I am pleased to write this forward as Albert has shown us both something of himself and God.

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"By this shall the world know
that you are My disciples,
if you love one another."
--Jesus Christ

FIRST CORINTHIANS: CHAPTER THIRTEEN

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels,
but do not have love,
I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries
and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to
remove mountains,
but do not have love,
I am nothing.
If I give away all my possessions,
and If I hand over my body so that I may boast,
but do not have love,
I gain nothing.
Love is patient, love is kind: love is not envious
or boastful or arrogant or rude.
It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful:
It does not rejoice in wrongdoing,
but rejoices in the truth.
It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things,
endures all things.
Love never ends. But as for prophecies,
they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease;
as for knowledge, it will come to an end.
For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part;
but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an
end.
When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child,
I reasoned like a child;
When I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.
For now we see in a mirror, dimly,
But then we will see face to face.
Now I know only in part; then I will know fully,
even as I have been fully known.
And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three:

AND THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE.

This lyric chapter, powerful by itself, is even more meaningful in its context. This love is not love in an ordinary or general sense, but the love for others which is known within the church, inspired ultimately by the love of God in Christ for us through the Holy Spirit.

This lyric chapter was written from Ephesus about 55 A.D. by Paul, the apostle to the gentiles. This poetry was not written only to the Corinthian Church. Its message is for all the churches of Jesus Christ, past, present and future.

L O V E
THE MAJESTIC GATEWAY OF LIFE

Speech is the visible embodiment and reflection of thought. Love is the mirror and manifestation of the heart. Language is the vocal and oral aspect of a thinking mind. Human language is the most important materialized power of communication between individuals and between nations.

Language is the most cherished possession of a person or nation. It is the legitimate and genuine expression of person's soul, the picture of his ancestors and the harmony of his constitution. Language can be gentle or sharp, beneficial or injurious, miraculous or destructive depending on who is using it and on how the language is being used.

Philosophers such as Plato, used language to show their wisdom. Some people think that philosophy is the topmost fountain of knowledge. Jesus, the divine manifestation, used language to speak to human hearts and souls. The "Hands" which knock on the door of our hearts do not hold flaming thunderbolts or arrows of death, but only the marks of nails for mercy and the open invitation of salvation. The affectionate hands of Jesus which healed the blind and cleaned the lepers, create harmony, happiness, salvation and peace when they touch the strings of a person's heart.

In the commandments of Jesus, the love of poverty is not arrogant asceticism. Jesus supremely loved those who became poor for the sake of the Kingdom. Jesus Christ expects us to be the embodiment of love in the lives of others. He did not live on earth for long, but, through His life and love, He saved many others.

We see God in the life of Jesus. Through Him we look. Through Him we know. We should believe in God because of God's holy Love revealed through Jesus. The blood of the Crucified One, flowed down the cross, spread upon the earth and outlined the course and the way of the Church.

It is not the **"what"** but the **"how"** of Christianity which will save mankind from death. The "how" of Christianity is not merely faith of the mind, but the self-sacrificing love embodied in suffering. Christianity, for some, consists of religious oration or the practice of a creed. The practical Christianity which Jesus demands from each believer is to love others even when they do not think like the believer and to have the spirit of toleration for those who are different in their faith. Christianity is built upon the mysticism of Jesus' sacrificial love. "The Jews ask for signs and miracles, and the Greeks pursue philosophy and wisdom. We preach Christ, the Messiah, crucified, which to the Jews is a scandal and an offensive stumbling block, and to the Gentiles is absurd and utterly unphilosophical nonsense"--I Cor. 1:23.

The virtual beauty and power of life is in
the miraculous expression of the LOVE of Jesus Christ.

written--November 15, 1998, Toronto

Translated--July 17, 2000--A. J. N.

L O V E
THE MAJESTIC GATEWAY

"If I can speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love I am only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."

Faith in God has been expressed in all forms of art, poetry, sculpture, philosophy, painting and literature about love. The ability to write poetry is a virtue, and few people do it justice. Poetry embodies beautiful thoughts, feelings or actions in melodious language. Christianity, in its attempt to purge the pagan ideology of many gods, revealed to mankind the true worshipful poetry of prayer. Without poetry there is no national identity. For the affirmation of historical facts, there are Homers, Virgils, Dantes, Shakespeares and Geothes. The Holy Bible is not a simple history book, but a storehouse of poetry and creativity and the jewel of literature which includes divine inspiration from the True God.

From this Fountainhead of Truth, I would like to express my thoughts and interpretations of what and why Paul, the apostle, wrote that supreme poetry in the 13th chapter of First Corinthians.

Humanity, individually and as a whole, needs and wants to converse with the Heavenly One, as well as communicate with each other. Earnest supplication, i.e., prayer to God, has two dimensions, "speaking" and "listening".

The spoken word can penetrate humanity's inner world and give wings to a person's soul. To "think" is a silent conversation and to "speak" is thinking aloud. The human body is a miraculous envelope which moves and speaks but that formation also has a sensitivity to and thirst for conversation with the Eternal. Let us communicate with God in order to learn how to speak to each other.

Mankind has endeavoured to speak in the tongues of angels and orators and with eloquence, logic, persuasion, proof and all types of political agendas. The human approach is void and accomplishes nothing, however, without love, true sensitivity, tears, suffering and sacrifice for one another.

What does it mean *to have love?* What does it mean *to love?* Love is not just an idea or a hypothesis. *To love* is to emancipate humanity. *To love* is to sanctify evil with forgiveness and endurance. *To love* is to suffer. *To love* is to approach and touch the heart of God. Many Christians love a Christ who is only a picture or a carved statue. Let us love the Christ who was crucified to save all people.

God created the world and the fullness of it. He created a beautiful blue charming sky and ocean and a lively world where life radiated with beauty. God did not abandon the earth and go on to other business. He has a lasting love for the whole world. He conferred on the world His attributes --His Breath, His Soul, His Essence and His Eternal **LOVE.**

The sanctifying crucifixion of Jesus was the divine action where God spoke in the tongue of angels to persuade humankind and draw individuals

to Himself. God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son. He used the majestic Gateway of Love which was the only bridge to lead humanity to life everlasting. It was the tears of the prodigal Son which reconciled the son to his father. It is the sanctifying love of Jesus which will convert a sinner and make him or her a citizen of Heaven. Therefore, the apostle Paul continues and says,

"Without love I am only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal".

Darkness symbolizes the infinite unknown and threatens the living with empty vanity, i.e., "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal". Any effort or endeavor which is done for fame and distinction, without love, is like a soap bubble which is here one moment and then lost forever. When someone is disillusioned with life, everything seems to be empty posturing. There are only two things which can never turn into vanity or egotism, and they are **Holiness and Love.**

The most important commandment of Jesus Christ, ***"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"***--John 13:35, unfortunately, is missing from the Nicene Creed. It should have been the first statement of faith for all Christians. It is unfortunate that three hundred years after Jesus Christ, the Church paid more attention to faith and philosophy than to loving one another.

As Christians, we should communicate with the Spirit of Love and become worthy children of our Maker and servants of our nation. Jesus was crucifie because He taught that type of love which demanded total devotion and self-sacrifice. He was perceived as a dangerous revolutionary by the authorities because of the influence of His ideas and His concept of love on ordinary people.

Eighty years ago when the Red Army victoriously was marching forward in Russia, the Communists were looking for a woman who belonged to the Imperial army. One evening a young lady, whose name was Natalie, knocked on this woman's apartment and asked if she was the woman being sought by the Army. Natalie warned her that she was being hunted and that night she could be executed. Natalie advised this imperial woman to run away. The mother looked at her two children and asked, "How?".

Natalie, who, until then, was only an unknown young lady, said, "You will be able to escape because I will stay with the children and declare that I am you." The mother said to Natalie, "But they will kill you". Natalie answered "I have no children...".

Jesus' offering of His life in the garden of Gethsemane was a similar form of self-sacrifice.

"If I have prophetic powers,
and understand all mysteries
and all knowledge, . . ."

We do not have the personal biographies of the prophets, but only

their messages. In the Greek language, the word 'prophet' means "He who speaks with God's inspiration". The Old Testament prophets--such as Nathan, Elijah, Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah--were titanic personalities. In the Bible, the prophet was the spokesperson for God. His or her role was to declare the will of God and to reveal God's judgements to the people. John the Baptist preached, not as a priest, but as a God-sent prophet. His message was apocalyptic. Through repentance, people would have the right to free themselves from the judgment of God. An internal and spiritual "voice" has always called the great prophets. The prophets valued moral principles instead of ceremonial worship and animal sacrifices in the temple.

The writings of the prophets are the expressions of daring and brave pioneers in Old Testament times. They emphasize four extremely important facts:

1. God is the one almighty Lord and the helmsman of nature and human history.
2. God is holy and He demands holiness and justice from humankind.
3. Sin is separation from God. It is the sin of individuals and of nations which bring about their downfall and destruction.
4. Sin cannot be exterminated by the blood sacrifice of animals. Sin can be forgiven by God's love when a man or woman turns to Him in repentance.

The Old Testament prophets' messages begin with, *"The Lord God says..."*. But Jesus Christ spoke by saying, ***"I say to you..."*** "The Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets were in effect until John came; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is proclaimed."--Luke 16:16. God revealed His mysteries of cosmic creation and love progressively to humankind through the prophets. In the Old Testament, divine revelation begins with the Law of Moses. It develops in the Psalms, becomes clearer with the prophets and reaches its highest point through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, who revealed the love of God by His humble life and His sanctifying Crucifixion.

The real spirit of prophecy is to witness for Jesus Christ by word of mouth and also by living and working in His loving spirit. God created all people equal, but to each person He bestowed various talents and authority. Prophecy is an extra gift which is given to some of the servants of God. To receive, whatever gift it may be, brings with it responsibility and duty. The human mind is one of the most beautiful gifts which God has granted to His loving humanity.

When a man or a woman, through his or her thought, feels the touch of the cosmic Mind, then he or she penetrates into the depth of the mysteries which, until then, were alien to that person. The apostle, Paul, in his vast vision, became an eye-witness to this ultimate mystery and named it **LOVE.**

Why is it that **love** should be considered the perfection of a Christian?

Love is that most powerful resource by which nature guarantees the continuation of life from generation to generation on earth. The intellect, the intention and the will of God is revealed to the world through His loving kindness. God speaks to the world in the language of love which we see in

the ultimate self-sacrificial life of humility and service of Jesus Christ. Golgotha is a sanctified pain, the power of faith and the childbirth pain of love. The Incarnation of Jesus is the mystical revelation of the unfathomable mind of God, the Father. The Crucifixion of Jesus tore away the gloomy veil in the temple in Jerusalem to reveal to the world the Love of God.

Because of His creative love, God humbled Himself and sent His Son down to earth to give an understanding of His love and a living perception to humanity. So, also, men and women should rise to the universal Love and Fountain of Life to find his or her Originator and God. The word **love** is not only meant for preaching and philosophical analysis, but also for useful application. There is no time, space, religion, age or nationality where love is not applicable.

The twentieth century has become the "scientific" age. I have printed the word scientific between inverted commas, because 20th century science consists only of knowledge and understanding of materialism. Humankind, instead of studying, searching and investigating spiritual, moral, ideal and benevolent knowledge in this modern age, has cultivated and developed the power of matter and its universal enslavement. Today the scientific world is yoked or harnessed to the manufacture of modern weaponry in order to kill more of humanity in less and less time.

Atheists demand proof and explanation rather than revelation. Scientists claim that they have found a piece of meteor about the size of a potato, fallen from Mars four and half billion years ago. These scientists think the rock contains some kind of fossilized microscopic life. This uncertain supposition has put the scientific world into an uproar. Why does it matter if there is life on Mars or not? According to the scientists, they will prove that life can emanate and rise by itself without a creator. They claim that divine interference is not a necessity, and, therefore, God has no existence!.

In the 19th century, mythology died and there dawned the understanding of the immensity of space. Louis Pascal cried out saying, "The immensity of space and its silence terrifies me". Together with scientific advances, we saw an insidious encroachment upon religious morals and values. It was like an infection in the body or the pollution of the atmosphere. There has been a degeneration of morals of the new generation and unbridled and licentious living, disintegration of family life and sorrowful and anxious living conditions and poverty.

Knowledge, as an objective characteristic, is desirable and covetable. Our Lord Jesus Christ has said,

"Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away
the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves,
and you hindered those who were entering."
Luke 11: 52.

What does it mean to have knowledge? Knowledge means to have acquaintance with facts, truths, or principles from study and investigation, i.e general erudition. Familiarity *or knowledge of human nature* is gained by insight, experience and report. Knowledge is the expression of

human consciousness whose central purpose is to embrace and to comprehend truth and reality. Mankind exists in a world where one not only sees and touches the existing concrete material things, but also the moral and spiritual facts and their effects--love, honour, truth, falsehood, good and evil. These things are real, not artificial. They are beyond the visible, tangible and approachable. They are eternal. We know the past. The present we see dimly, but the future is hazy to most of humanity.

The present knowledge and the assumptions of scientific knowledge are the expressions and pictures of touchable and visible matter. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, Who came from the realm of spiritual reality, revealed to mankind truth and eternal realities which are beyond natural knowledge and comprehension. Paul, the apostle of the gentiles, in one of his poetic inspirational moments, eloquently raised LOVE above and beyond natural knowledge.

Why is love so important. Mankind has the capability of storing knowledge without using it and keeping his knowledge unproductive. It is similar to that servant who, after receiving one talent, went and dug a hole in the ground and left it there. It is impossible for mankind to "store" love or to love someone without expressing that love. To give and be given is the revelation of love. It is impossible for a person to grow morally and spiritually without the grace of giving. The criterion and yardstick of our moral growth is in our giving and loving. It is possible to love even the unlovable.

"If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing."

What is faith?

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. What is seen was made from things that are not visible"--Heb. 11:1.

To believe in God and His Fatherhood is one of those fantastic aspects of human life which can neither be analyzed in a lab nor defined reasonably or rationally. The role of a Christian is to believe, suffer and wait. "To believe" is to have the mastery of mystical thought whose experiential proof is within itself. It is the irresistible feeling of certainty which ignites and maintains a Christian's enthusiasm.

True faith which has been revealed by the Incarnate Jesus Christ is more reliable and above nationality, language and racial identity. This miraculous faith does not have equal intensity or force in all individuals, nor is it expressed equally, because not every person equally believes in God. Human beings have erred from their calling and have sacrificed the ideal of love to materialistic ends. The opposite of ambition and ***self*** is the world of faith. It is the world of the idealist and the world of moral beauty.

Faith is seen as a hallucination for those who have a mechanical, worldly point of view, whereas, for a believer, faith is life, power and

salvation. In the presence of belief, knowledge submits itself and philosophy keeps silent. The key by which Jesus lived was His faith and His love towards God and man. If a person does not and cannot see the Creator within this cosmic beautiful world, it is not his faith which is lacking but his ***reasoning*** powers.

A person's faith is the rekindling of the divine love. Love makes a person chivalrous and faith sanctifies a sinner. The Prodigal Son returned to his father, because he believed in his father's **love.** The life and the accomplishment of Jesus Christ should not be studied as a scholastic excercise, but rather experienced as a spiritual conversion to belief, love and mercy.

The Father of Armenian history, Moses of Khoren, testified that St. Mesrob Mashdots had an angelic appearance and a prolific mind. He was a radiant preacher, physically stately, direct in his faith, patient in hope, lovingly sincere and an inspiring teacher. People who have achieved greatness have done so because their ***faith and love*** have always walked together.

To "believe" means to become identified with what or with whom you believe and also to identify with others who also believe. If we believe in God, then we are obliged to love all those who believe. John, the apostle, in his Gospel emphasized "love" more than "belief", because "belief", by itself, is mere knowlege, but ***"to believe"*** is an act of labour. To pray, is the first sign of believing. The potentiality of belief is in having the freedom of not believing or to continue believing.

The exquisite parables of Jesus are descriptive narratives about His native land and reveal His understanding of its people and culture. He paid attention to the poor and the rich, to the Jew and the pagan and to all who walked on the streets and in the blind alleys of His native land.

The Christian, in spite of witnessing the agonies of suffering and having lost many dreams, still continues to believe. For example, the Armenian nation remained faithfully gathered within its Church and bound to its faith in spite of centuries of persecution. To believe and to love are those twin rays of light which sanctify man and woman and make the "Invisible" visible. The majestic presence and unsurpassed holiness of God radiates from the unselfish love of Jesus Christ and that pure love is expected to shine also from each and every Christian. The death of Jesus Christ reconciled man to God's loving and forgiving mercy.

Sometimes Christians face seemingly unconquerable difficulties. They subdue thousands of obstacles. They are often jeered at, scoffed at and martyred but they stay faithful to their Lord Jesus Christ because, within their faith, they have cultivated a loving communion with God.

"If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing".

How is it possible that a Christian can give away all of his or her

belongings to the poor and even be martyred for his or her faith and yet these sacrifices seem to be worth nothing. It should not be forgotten that believing in the divine revelation, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, was not a pagan religious theoretical speculation. To believe in Christ is to become a pilgrim or an apprentice in the way of sanctifying life. It is not a theological creed. The terms or obligations of a person who wants to follow Jesus Christ, are:

"Let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.
For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose
their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it".
--Mark 8:35

In Christian understanding, the utmost challenge is not to give away one's wealth to the poor or martyrdom but the ***denial of the self.*** A man or a woman can give up posessions and acquisitions but be unable to deny *their* ***self.*** That invisible self, or the real essence which constitutes the person, is the untouchable individuality which we call the human personality. To follow Jesus means to surrender one's will and to renounce that "self" or the invisible essence and personality of which he or she is so proud. A follower of Jesus is commanded to forget his or her cherished personality with all its requirements and wordly delights and desires. It is only then that a follower of Jesus can express in his or her daily living, the image of the invisible God Who pours out loving kindness and mercy to all people.

Jesus Christ did not invite His followers to asceticism or physical mortification. "Poverty" did not mean an ascetic display of clothing or behaviour. The fourth and fifth centuries were the time period when Christians debated and quarreled among themselves for orthodoxy and asceticism in religious and philosophical terms. However, even in their sackcloth, these Christians displayed arrogance and pride in their "humility"!

Ascetics and hermits wrestled against the infidelity of believers and against the superficial immorality of the nations by their speeches, writing, preaching, asceticism and martyrdom. They could not save themselve's however, from the sins of glory, pride and vanity. What the Lord God wants from us is not our separation from the world but, rather, our willingness to serve the world and to witness about His marvellous love and mercy to others. Jesus prayed to the Father saying,

"I am not asking you to take them out of the world,
but I ask you to protect them from the evil one".
John. 17:15.

Through sanctification, the physical is transformed into the spiritual, the finite into the infinite, and the temporal into the eternal. Jesus called His disciples to holiness. It was the spiritual light which raised Mary of Magdala from a life of sin to a life of sanctity and unselfish service. Through the power of prayer and denial of self, a clumsy piece of wood was transformed into a redeeming cross. Satan drops weed seeds within our

thoughts to deflect us from holiness and selfless living. A Christian cannot avoid temptation through asceticism.

Acording to St. Gregory of Datev (1346-1409), a theologian, philosopher and economist who disengaged the spiritual from material, said. *"The sanctity of the heart can be cleansed and transfigured so that the believer will reach to see and love God".* The sanctified and consecrated ones are those who, in spite of staying in the world, are able to climb above wordly temptations. Truth, love and holiness will eventually keep the Church of Jesus firm and solid. Holiness is having the presence of God within a believer's soul. God's grace, light and intimacy keeps a person sanctified. Enlightened believers pray saying, "Thy Kingdom come, O God of heaven".

Holiness is an ideal and a commandment. Holiness should be achieved by a kind of living which expresses service to others and loving kindness. A person is lifted from his or her material and earthly existence through sanctification into a rebirth of spirituality. It involves prayer and denial of self (voluntarily accepting the will of God). The sublime presence of God is continually being beamed to humanity through the life of Jesus Christ. Each believer is expected to be the mirror or reflection of Jesus.

"Love is patient; love is kind;

To have patience means to be forbearing, to be quiet (even at someone's wrong doing) and to practise tolerance, forgiveness and endurance. The spirit of endurance against wrong comes only from the fountain of The loving God.

Why should a Christian be patient? The follower of Jesus is supposed to be a reflection of his Teacher. All believing Christians mirror their Lord Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, some have represented their Lord in the wrong way to the world.

In the past, the Church fathers falsified the image of Jesus in their ecumenical dialogues, slander, jealousy and excommunication of their fellow bishops. Paul, the apostle, forsaw that the clergies of the Church could become victims of human ambition and glory. He cautioned and warned the churches not to judge and not to make unloving remarks and decisions.

It is an unrefutable historic fact, that after the Nicene World Assembly in 325 A.D., the Church of Jesus, instead of becoming a powerful world-wide religion, began to slow down and regress. Since 325, every World Assembly, instead of becoming an incentive for brotherly love, became a destructive force and a plague to the advancment of the Christian Church.

The Monophysitic and The Calcedonian "Two-Nature doctrine" which the church created, was another blow which separated the Eastern churches from one another. Because of this unloving doctrine, the Byzantine armies tried to weaken the Armenian forces in the eleventh century. Because of this doctrinal hate and enmity between Byzantium

and Armenia, the Turks overran Armenia and Asia Minor and, eventually, Byzantium lost not only its empire, but also its existence. First Byzantium, by losing her friendly neighbour, Armenia, and then Egypt, allowed the whole of North Africa to become Muslim.

In the Nicene Creed, which is recited every Sunday in Christian churches all over the world, there is not a single word about love and loving-kindness. Isn't that a shame! Why does the Nicene Creed not start by declaring, "We believe in God and in loving one another"? It is because the church fathers did not have the love of God for one another when they composed it!

With love and sweet patience, the World Church Council could have accomplished much more than what was achieved by anathematizing and excommunicating John Chrisostom, the patriarch of Constantinople, and many others. The churches of today are on the same crossroad. The voice of St. Paul is still ringing today and saying, *"Love is patient; love is kind"*.

Love, respect, patience and mutual compliance create peaceful and triumphant coexisting churches where people, instead of being offended, turn to faith and to the abode of hope.

"Love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude."

The above command is given to individuals as well as to churches. It was not given to churches built by stone or masonary, but to the organized assembly of believers in Jesus.

What is **envy**?

Envy is a feeling of discontent or mortification, usually with ill will, at seeing another's superiority, advantages, or success. It is a desire for some advantage possessed by another. The letter of James very significantly comments about envy by saying, *"For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, and without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy"*--14-16.

Envy, love of glory, selfishness and pride turns a person into a ferocious beast. To be ambitious is not forbidden to a Christian. We have to be ambitious to learn and to build character. Armenians call this ambition--*good ambition*. A believer should be zealous and fervent to stand up for his faith and sanctity. Where do you find today the fervent and ardent faith of Christians to stand up for their Church and Christian faith? American and Canadian Christians not only have lost their zeal, but they even have given up teaching religious education in the public schools.

Envy is a drop of fire. Envy can transport hell into the hearts of mankind. Shakespeare, the literary titan of English literature, compares an envious man to a "green-eyed monster" who looks on humanity with sarcasm. The hub of Othello's tragedy was his envy. Ghazar Parbetsi (442 A.d.), one of the very highly educated Armenian clergymen, was the

second person to write about the history of Armenia. When he arrived from Byzantium, his fellow churchmen, instead of appreciating his talent, became envious of him. The monks censured his faith and morality. They defamed him as a heretic and the poor scholar died of a broken heart.

The envy, jealousy and dissention among the Eastern Churches at Byzantium, Antioc, Alexandria and Jerusalem made the Roman Church, involuntarily, the reconciler of the churches. Consequently the bishop of Rome became the most powerful bishop.

Envy is born within each man or woman and grows with the person every passing year. It is a part of human nature and it is almost impossible to uproot. However, it is possible to ***convert*** and transform envy into *"good envy and gentle competition"*. An envious person tries to satisfy his selfish desires by destroying his opposition. Ironically, an envious and ambitious person is his or her own enemy and eventually will destroy him or herself. Envy, within the Christian understanding, is sin and the mother of many sins.

Our dear apostle, Paul, while writing to the Galatian Church, says, *"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another"*--5:24-26.

What role does **pride** play in a human being?

Without the illumination of divine faith, the physical light of reason in the human mind is arrogant and proud. It is a plague and a curse to the human world. There were proud and haughty nations who used their warring might to colonize other nations, appropriate the Americas, create great empires and enslave unarmed Africans. The tragedy and irony of all this is that it was done in the name of God!

What can Armenians be proud of today? What have we accomplished or done in the past that the present generation can admire? The Armenian nation never colonized lands which belonged to others and never created an empire by a worldly perspective. Are we not worth anything because we were not a warring nation?

Armenians can be proud, without being arrogant and haughty, of our spiritual conquests. For example:

1. In 301 the Armenian nation accepted the Christian religion and declared Armenia as a Christian nation.
2. We overcame our illiteracy by creating the Armenian alphabet.
3. In 431 A.D. we completed the translation of the Holy Bible into the Armenian language.

There was one bloody war in the fifth century which the Armenian nation was drawn into, and it is called the Vartanants (this was a war when the Zorostrian King wanted to return the Armenian nation to the Iranian religion). However, this warfare was not for the enslavement of other people. It was not for gold or power, but to seal the Christian faith within the soul of each Armenian. For the past fifteen hundred years there is not a single Armenian community which does not remember this spiritual conquest.

Does the Armenian national struggle to survive as a Christian nation speak significantly to today's generation?

"Knowledge puffs up; but love builds up"--I Corin. 8:1

"For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted"--Luke 14:11.

Humility, to a Christian, is that superb virtue through which the person reaches maturity and becomes conscious about his or her limitations. For example:

The person becomes conscious that, whatever he or she has and whatever that talent is, it is a gracious gift from God the Creator.

Humbleness should not be confused with inferiority, shabbiness or fearfulness.

Courage also is a Christian virtue. A believer should be brave for truth and justice, even if it costs his life.

A Christian should have courage against lying and bravery against sin and Satan.

A Christian should stand for the defence of the weak and persecuted.

A Christian can raditate love, peace and hope while still being humble and meek.

Truly it is the meek and the humble who will inherit the world and reign in the hearts of mankind.

God loves meek souls. He also loves sinners who come to Him with humble hearts and a desire to be forgiven and sanctified. Such a person knows how to humble himself in the presence of holiness. (Read the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican who went to the temple to pray).

Mother Theresa was an example of modest humility in the service that she gave to the poor and the outcast.

Our Lord Jesus washed the dirty feet of His disciples and even the feet of Judas. Action is more influencial and speaks louder than speech.

The Church of Jesus is built on meekness, humbleness, serving others, self sacrificing, justice, love and truth. Paul, the apostle, out of his long life experience, counsels the churches saying,

"Let all men know and perceive and recognize your unselfishness--your considerateness, your forbearing spirit".

Phil. 4:5

The Incarnate Son of God overcomes the pride and arrogance of Zion (the Church), not by cunning or rudeness, but through meekness--by sitting on an ass and being glorified by children and simple folks. Pride and arrogance accompany vanity, hypocrisy and sarcasm. Our Saviour Jesus, the God of humble souls, says,

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;
for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you
will find rest for your souls"--Mat. 11:29.

"Love does not insist on its own way"
for it is not self-seeking, it is not
touchy or fretful or resentful;

For a practising Christian, it is unbecoming to bevulgar and rude. A Christian's lips should be clean and his or her tongue used for praising the Lord, because he or she is supposed to be a messenger of God. Paul, the apostle, is not only a simple preacher, but he also is a spiritual sociologist. Let us listen to what he has to say: "My brethren, earnestly desire and set your hearts on prophesying--on being inspired to preach and teach and to interpret God's will and purpose--and do not forbid or hinder speaking in (known) tongues.

"But all things should be done with regard to decency and propriety and in an orderly fashion"--I Cor. 14:39-40

A Christian should keep his or her integrity in joyfulness as well as in affliction. Without responsibility there is no rightfulness; without labour there is no recompense; without effort there can not be spiritual enjoyment. A believer has the freedom to enter into the most intimate relationship with his Lord Jesus Christ and learn about spiritual grace.

The "Ego" is a person's moral preference for self. A person's **"Ego"** will continue as long as he or she serves for the glory of God. God had so much occupied and seized the hearts of the Armenian Bible translators in the fifth century, that they forgot their egos and drowned their personalities in the stream of divinity.

A disciple of Jesus Christ does not worry *only about himself* but, first, he or she likes *to help others.* A materialistic person is spiritually bankrupt.

In the 20th century, the language of the Holy Bible has been translated into psychological terminology. For example:

1. The preachers of the Gospel coach their congregations in the philosophy of psychologists instead of instructing the public in the self denial taught by Jesus Christ,
2. Instead of supporting abstinence, the preachers and their congregations are preoccupied with health.
3. Our age has become the age of worshipping the "ego" and satisfying the self.
4. The present age is the age of worship at the temple of the "Ego". Instead of submitting the self to God's will, there is a fixation with **my** cmfort, **my** success, and **my** victory.

There cannot be a more horrible or more deplorable moral degradation than when a person tries to establish personal glorification within God-given goodness. Inspite of living in a noble and ideal civilization, the materialistic ideology has taken over human desire. The love of money and power has reached its apex. Conditions have been created where the individual has become self-conceited and self-serving and unwilling to accept or assist others. He or she denies his or her humanity and becomes a self-centered mechanical being.

The Church has sowed egoism and now we are going to reap loneliness.

We have planted covetousness and, behold, we will reap privation.

We have stirred up disconcertment and, lo, we will find fiery confusion.

Because of egoism, mankind withdraws from society, breaks away to worship at the altar of "Self" and becomes separated from God.

"Love takes no account of the evil done to it. It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail.

Malcom X (African-American Muslin preacher) touched a chord which echoed anger, revenge and rudeness. On the other hand, Martin Luther King Jr. touched a Christian chord which rang with love and harmony between whites and blacks.

In Jerusalem, we see Jesus going into the temple and driving out those who sold and bought in the temple area, and overturning the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who dealt in doves. Jesus would not permit any one to carry household equipment through the temple enclosure making the temple area a short-cut traffic lane. He taught and said to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have turned it into a den of robbers."--Mark 11:15-17.

The action of Jesus in the temple should be placed between the *force* of anger and the *ferociousness* of anger. Christians should be very careful with anger. It is usually considered that anger is negative and wrong. It is true that, if anger stays too long within a person, it could become destructive. But there is also the anger for justice which is both edifying and constructive. An anger for justice can become a barricade against military dictatorship.

The greatest enemy which threatens the human mind is anger. Violent anger darkens the human mind and its vision. The Roman, Voradios Flaggas, wrote that "Fury is short-lived "madness". Only the fear of God restrains a person from sin. It has been said, "Fear those who do not fear God." Men and women refrain from sin because of punishment rather then because they love God and desire to please Him.

Evil and corruption co-operate to ensure their victories. Why? Because Jesus said, "Let them (the wheat and the tares) grow together until the harvest"...Jesus instructed His disciples saying, "No, let them be; for in gathering the tares you would uproot the wheat along with them."

The world-wide churches in their World Council discussions, beginning from the fourth century on, were disobedient to their Lord's commandment, *"No; for in gathering the tares you would uproot the wheat along with them."* What a misfortune it was to see wheat (couragious and faithful bishops) judged as heretics and banished from the Church. Ironically, many pagan doctrines were introduced within the church as orthodox dogmas by these same World Councils.

It is beyond my right and limitation to judge or condem the decisions of the World Council of Churches. Judgement belongs to the Head of the Church, Who is Jesus Christ. He said, "Let them grow together (the wheat and the tares) until the harvest."

I will also add another thought, "Unanimity and harmony is the mother of good action, but disunion and antagonism are the birthing of the evil-one."--by Yeghishe, one of the disciples of St. Mesrob who translated the Bible to Armenian. Maliciousness and selfish gain should never be used in criticism.

Justice is a very common and ordinary word for a politician and it is frequently a front or cover-up for illicit gain, fraud and deception. It is the duty of the press to challenge, question and expose corruption, abuse of power and ill-gotten gains. But the press is often controlled by politicians and by the financial power brokers who keep the politicians in office. Therefore, when the foundations of a fortress are dislodged, unlawfulness and illicit gain become law instead!

Sometimes we humans think that God is incapable of preventing evil and suffering in the world. Only faith can penetrate and comprehend the omnipotent God's totalitarian and mystic authority. Luke wrote, *"He is kind and charitable and good to the ungrateful and the selfish and wicked"*– Luke 6:36. Darkness and obscurity exist where there is want of light. Evil is the lack of goodness and corruption is the lack of holiness. A ship's pilot cannot stop a tempest, but he can navigate in such a way that the ship will not be wrecked upon the rocks. A disciple of Jesus Christ ought to do likewise.

God allows evil because He can turn man's evil actions into His divine plan. For example:

1. God converted Joseph's cruel sale into slavery into the enentual means of salvation of Jacob and his family from starvation.
2. Because Hebrew babies were being murdered, Moses' mother put him into a basket in the Nile river and he became educated and was treated as Pharaoh's own son.
3. Because sinful humanity crucified and killed Jesus, God converted that human wrong action into the salvation of mankind--Rom. 8:28.

If a man or a woman cannot restrain evil physically, he or she should try to do so verbally, and, if that is impossible, he or she should subdue it in his or her mind. *"The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, and every kind of wicked deceptions"*--2 Thes. 2:9.

To love, is to sanctify an evil through forgiveness.

There is wickedness, sinfulness and degeneration, but also there is creativity, prayer, holiness and cleanliness. *"Rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings"*--I Peter 5:12. *"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings, by becoming like Him in His death."* Said Paul the apostle--Phil. 3:10.

"***Love does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail.***

Injustice is the action and performance of wrong against someone or to something. The general public should not support injustice, falsehood and unrighteousness. Paul, that brave apostle of the the gentiles, wrote, *"The coming of the Antichrist is through the activity and working of Satan, and will be attended by great power and with all sorts of miracles and signs and delusive marvels"*--2 Thes. 2:9. People can never gather the fruit of happiness from a tree of corruption.

In 1878 when Europe and Russia wanted to take charge of "the Armenian problem", Mr. Benjamin Disraeli, the then prime minister of Great Britain, concluded a secret treaty with Turkey so that Britain would be the negotiator. As a result of this secret negotiation, the Ottoman Empire let Great Britain have the island of Cyprus. Thus, the Ottoman Empire was able to do what it liked (the injustices, opressions and mass killings) with Armenia. Armenia was left to be plundered and its people mass-murdered. The crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ was a similar act of betrayal.

The international capitalistic system is also the root of our present social woes. The international capitalistic system uses the word "**Democracy**" as a mask to cover up its real agenda and to give it free reign in world affairs. ***"God's wrath and indignation"*** (words which are written in Rom. 1.18) are not sentimental words, but a total opposition to evil, sin and injustice, which are irreconcilable with God's goodness, sanctity and mercy. Half-hearted attempts at justice only opens the gate to new injustices.

Justice will exist always and it will stand up higher than an individual, family, party or class. It has no classification nor beginning nor end. Until the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the word **"Truth"** was a theoretical and philosophical word. In the living Christ, "Truth" became touchable and seeable. God gave substance to His identity and turned it into a visible and tangible expression--the Incarnation. It is unfortunate that truth and right are forgotten in the hands of spiritually vacant people. Truth, in the mean time, is a fact, practice and event which has no past, no present and no tomorrow. Truth receives its radiant power from the Eternal Light. That which is ***Truth, is also a Way and Life.*** God can not be found or seen by reasoning or personal effort, but only through revelation.

When a person loses the concept of the Absolute (God), he or she also loses the understanding of truth as opposed to fiction. If the human perception of truth is subjective and relative, then what is the truth? What is right and what is wrong?

Jesus Christ is the touchable embodiment of God the heavenly Sublimate, the untrampled Sanctity, the inaccessible Height, the incontestable Goodness, life's greatest Light and the Divine Anointed.

"Love bears up under anything and everything that comes".

In the name of freedom and liberty, the 20th century has overturned the balance of justice. Devotion to God, feelings of respect, and acts of self-sacrifice are regarded as weaknesses instead of virtues. The strong wins and the weak are supressed. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. A loving person always bears up under want and persecution. A loving person always is patient, tolerant, enduring and long suffering.

"Love is ever ready to believe the best of every person"

To be truly alive, a person must believe in the essence of life and in its ulltimate objective. To believe, is to have mastery of that mystic thought whose verification is within itself. The endorsement of its guarantee keeps a believer enthusiastic. To believe means to assent to God's authority and His guardianship, to will it, to depend upon it, and to trust in it.

The soul that does not believe in God, could be called an unborn child. As an unborn child in the womb cannot understand, lives in darkness and has no personality, so also is the soul of an unbelieving person. Therefore, when an unbeliever dies, it could be said that he or she was aborted and died before being born. God is perceived not by our physical senses, but through our spiritual eyes.

"Love's hopes are fadeless under all circumstances".

God's love and forgiveness enables a person to become fully human. God's hopeful promises save mankind from disillusionment and disenchantment. This type of hope comes only from God, who is the ultimate conqueror. Medicine which is given to a patient is only part of the recovery. The rest is faith, encouragement and hope.

Men or women percieve the significance of life from the Christian perspective of eternal life. Hope is the force or the anchor behind future progress. The duty of a loving Chritian is to convey hope to the hopeless, peace to those who suffer and consolation and comfort to those who mourn.

Alexander the Great, before conquering the eastern empires, distributed his worldly possessions to his top generals. His loyal gererals asked Alexander the Great, "Lord what do you have now for yourself?" He answered saying, **"HOPE".**

To a believer, "hope" is a living personality--personified in Jesus Christ, our Light and our Life. Christ stands as the Light of the world. He gives us hope in the storms of life. He is the liferaft in the violent and billowing waves of human life. The words of Jesus are both a lighthouse of hope and a trusted anchor. The twentieth century came to the Armenians

with genocide, fear and death. It departed from us with the unexpected realization of hope for an independent and free Armenia.

"Love endures everything without weakening".

To be able to endure is a virtue. Jesus tolerated and healed all human weaknesses, but He did not forgive hypocrisy. He called hypocrites the "sons of vipers". Hypocrisy is not a human weakness. Hypocrites trust and co-operate with evil and cooperate and renounce whatever is good. The foundation of nationalism should be the ideal of toleration and self sacrifice. Its motivation should be love and forbearance.

"Love never fails--never fades out or becomes obsolete, it is inexhaustible".

Love never ends. It is perpetual and permanent. It is like time which has no beginning or ending. Martyrs will hear the voice of the Perpetual Love and the echo of the Eternal Resurrection. The virtues of Christian faith are infinite and will never perish. The Love of God is unchangable. It is an eternal reality. The word "eternal" means enduring, abiding, outlasting and surviving.

In order to immortalize the memory of our incomparable church fathers, St. Sahag and St. Mesrob, we have to follow in their footsteps and transmit our heritage--The Holy Bible and its study--to the new generation with a deeper faith. Prayer and Bible study have given birth to heroes, built character, forged devotees and opened the gate to eternal life. The anniversary of a believer will be changed to centenaries, millenniums and endless eternity.

Through Jesus, the past ceases to be past.

Through Jesus, the present ceases to be transitory.

Through Jesus, the whispering of eternity turns into the **Conquering March.**

The perpetuality of the universe is possible because of the uncreated condition of matter. If you want temporary happiness, retaliate. If you want to be eternally happy, be loving and forgiving. Jesus Christ is the fountain where you can seek and find the perpetual in the present transitory age. Science is built on the laws of relativity, space, and time. Science has not pointed out a single eternal law.

The "present" is the space of time within which the force of cosmic energy, creates, gives birth and gives orders for the execution of new worlds. If a person looks upon eternal realities from this perspective, he will understand a little about the eternal present and where past and future expectations join one another. This is what we call the Cosmic Presence or The Absolute Reality.

"As for prophecy it will be fulfilled and pass away; as for tongues, they will be destroyed and cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away."

The apostle, through the above spoken words, is trying to express the realities which the church fathers could not accomplish in spite of all their years of arguing and fighting with one another. The reason, is because they did not have the love of Jesus:

"By this shall all know that you are My disciples, if you love one another"--John 13:35.

The quotation, "as for prophecy, it will be fulfilled and pass away" does not mean the prophecies themselves, but their doctrinal interpretations. The church fathers caused so much dissention that the Church of Jesus Christ regressed and did not advance or spread toward the East. Even today, the churches in the world do not want to join hands with each other because of doctrinal misunderstandings. Jesus never gave a doctrine or creed. His command was to *"Love one another* ***as I have loved you".***

"As for tongues, they will cease". This signifies that the need for tongues will not be necessary. People will have one language as they had before the building of the tower of Babylon.

"As for knowledge, it will pass away". Knowledge will lose its value and be superseded by truth. Divine revelation begins exactly where human knowledge begins to stutter. Scientific knowledge is continually changing. It changes its terms, rank, station, stage, and steps.

Knowledge which is taught in colleges is built upon the laws of relativity. Knowledge can lift up a man or woman externally in appearance only, but never morally, rationally or spiritually. The spiritual person can be known only by divine disposition. Learning and knowledge are only visual realities. Why not also believe in reality which is unseen and out of our perception?

St. Paul, under divine inspiration, writes about the True Knowledge, saying,

"Furthermore, I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly. ... And that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection; and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed to His death."--Phil. 3:8,10.

Therefore when earthly limitations are transformed or lifted from men and women, the Divine Truth will put an end to worldly knowledge.

"For our knowledge is fragmentary, and our prophecy is fragmentary".

The above explanation of the apostle who was martyred for his faithfulness to the Lord, has a mystic power within itself. Paul frankly acknowledged that his educational learning at the feet of the great Rabbi Gamaliel could not offer him as much divine understanding as Jesus gave to him in the loneliness of the Arabian desert. For example, when we look at the elements and heavenly stars with the natural eye, we do not think that we are masters of nature. Today with the electronic microscope and the Hubble telescope, our horizon has been changed and we can see new and admirable worlds. Similarly, the insight of St. Paul shows us what will happen after the resurrection. Let us humble ourselves and become believers in the divine revelation.

"But when the complete and perfect comes, the incomplete and imperfect will vanish away".

"When the complete comes" means that humankind will live in a progressive world until it reaches perfection. Christianity is the faith of light and hope. In order to immortalize the spiritual achievements of our forefathers we should follow in the steps of St. Sahag and St. Mashdots handing to the new generation the word of God, not only in writing, but through our living.

Today the public drives automobiles and uses telephones, television and computers at home and at work. Are people today better men and women than people in the past? Are they happier? Never. Not only have they forgotten the commandments, but there even are students who murder their fellow students in public schools...! True knowledge, enjoyment and happiness will come when evil is conquered by the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"When I was a child, I talked like a child I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; now that I have become a man, I am done with childish ways and have put them aside".

How many of us remember our childhood, and how many remember passing from childhood to maturity? In the world there are innumerable people who have never reached maturity. The mature Christian walks forward today with suffering and persecution. Tomorrow he or she will walk holding the torch of life high and with a joyful heart, because he or she sees the invisible greatness and hears the heavenly music.

"Now we are looking in a mirror that gives only a dim reflection"

Paul, who saw and talked with the charismatic Jesus and was enriched with personal heavenly visions, humbled himself and said, *"Now we are looking... in a mirror that gives only a dim reflection".* Humility is one of those virtues of a Christian, through which he or she percieves his or her consciousness. The truly humble person knows that everything he or she has, is entirely the gift and the mercy of God. We should not confuse humility with disgrace or cowardliness.

The world renowned Toscanini was practicing Beethoven's ninth symphony in the New York Philharmonic Theater with his symphonic choir. Toscanini gave his choir such an inspirational experience that, at the end of the practice, the whole choir stood up and applauded and cheered with such fervour that poor Toscanini could not stop them. When the uproar finally ended, Toscanini, with trembling voice and tears running down his face, said to the choir, "My friends, I am not Beethoven. Beethoven is the real musician while Toscanini is nothing". True greatness is in humility.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the conquest of light over darkness, the power of immortality over death, the victory of love over hatred and the triumph of goodness over evil. Jesus Christ eternally says to you and to me, *"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is wholesome and My burden is light and easy to be borne"*--Math. 11:29-30.

Those unprecedented words could not have been written by anyone except the Son God Who had experienced divine harmonious love and the joy of unity of His will with that of the Father. But when we turn our eyes to the church fathers who followed the humble apostles who had lived unselfishly and died as martyrs, we cannot visualize why the church fathers were so proud, selfish and unloving of one another that they did not have the compassion, love and unity among themselves to inscribe even one word of ***"love"*** in the Nicene Creed. They could easily and triumphantly have written, ***"I believe and love*** the Father almighty". On the lips of our Lord and Saviour the words "faith and love" always were spoken together and love was the commandment given to the disciples. The churches, however, demanded faith and philosophical terminology from believers, but never love, compassion and patience. The absence of "love" in our faith and creed resulted in the dreaded Inquisition. It's time now for the church to wake up and add that missing word, not only in writing but also in real living, for the followers of Jesus Christ.

"But then we shall see in reality and face to face!"

Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, used the words ***"But then".*** He had the spirit of waiting and expectation which he spread around to the

believers. Paul inspired hope to the hopeless, peace to the suffering, and comfort to those in a mourning. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from death today, will become the certitude of tomorrow's eternity.

"Now I know in part; but then I shall know and understand fully and clearly, even in the same manner as I have been fully and clearly known and understood".

Spiritual Light leads us to not only recognize and know the person of Jesus, but also to appropriate and assimilate Him and to receive His likeness. For believers, the name of Jesus Christ should not bring to mind a picture of a dead holy person, a hero's memorial or monument, or a place of pilgrimage. Jesus Christ is God's incarnated Son Who was made man.

There are opinions and styles of life which enrich a person's soul such as when an author or a poet describes the blessedness of suffering and the realities of life. "O Christ, reflect Yourself in our daily living." The highest pinnacle of human life is to know Jesus Christ as the Saviour of our soul. The last testament and the legacy of Jesus to His disciples was His revelation of God:

"I made Your name known to them and revealed Your character and Your very self, and I will continue to make You known"--John 17:26.

Man's highest striving should be to achieve and to know God as revealed by our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

"And so faith, hope, love abide; these three, but the greatest of these is love".

*St***.** Paul was also a sacred poet who climbed the mountain of God, but instead of bringing down the Law through a burning bush, he brought to mankind the loving heart of God which is in ***faith, hope and love.***

The Spartan, Likourkos, and the Athenian, Solon, were notable and eminent law-givers. For the Hebrew people it was Moses. The oldest law giver in history is supposed to be Hamurabi, the king of Babylon, who lived about eight hundred years before Moses. He was a contemporary of Abraham.

At the outset of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that the Law--the "Old" Testament--should be interpreted and perceived from a new perspective. Through Jesus Christ, the Word of God was expressed, not on the mount of Sinai, but in the "Sermon on the Mount" with the nine blessings. Jesus did not abolish the Mosaic Law but He gave the real and geniune understanding of the Law without human prejuduce. Jesus said, *"God is a Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in*

truth." He also said, *"The law and the prophets were in effect until John came; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is proclaimed, and everyone tries to enter it by force."*--Luke 16:16.

The commandments of God progress from the legal to the moral and from the moral to the spiritual. Life in its essence is spiritual and is ruled by moral and spiritual principles. The three spiritual foundations for Christians are ***faith, hope and love of God.*** Spiritual and sublime matters are not concrete, touchable or visible, but rather sensible and perceptible only through a spiritual faculty. *Mysticism* is not perception by human senses, but comprehension by the spiritual eye of faith. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Paul, the apostle, was spiritually transfigured and united with the soul of the Resurrected One. Paul exclaimed saying, "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." Why is **love** the greatest***?***

Jesus, after His resurrection, met and fed the disciples who were fishermen. When Jesus and Peter were alone, the victorious Resurrected Saviour asked Peter a question. Jesus did not reprimind Peter for denying Him. Neither did Jesus demand a confession or repentance from Peter. Jesus directed one question only to Peter and this was more forceful than either repentance or confession.

Jesus opened up a new horizon. He asked only one question of Peter, saying, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these". Jesus repeated His question three times. His touch, look, and especially His words of justice and right are assembled and condensed into the word ***Love.*** If you love God, you have no need for confession or repentance. If you love God, you have no need to fear God.

LOVE IS THE FULFILMENT OF THE LAW.

Among the Old Testament prophets, Hosea is the first one who sees the loving kindness of God and expresses the fatherly kindness of God using the word ***"love".*** Hosea says,

"I led them with cords of kindness, with bands of love.
I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks,
I bent down to them and fed them."--11:4

The word "love" was not created to be only preached, but to be used, lived and expressed. It was meant to establish a bridge between a lover and the loved one. Wisdom and the sense of life is found only within loving and goodness.

Some theologians are only interested in the Bible's literary language, phraseology and authors and not with the message of the Holy Bible. Jesus called Himself the "Messenger and the Word" of God. He is the living, meaningful Interpretor of the essence and the being of God. The important thing is not who has written the Bible, but who has revealed God. Jesus Christ lived as a ***living*** revelation of God and He mirrored God as Love.

Love is a sea which is as deep as the ocean and as high as the sky.

Love is the meaning of life and life is the manifestation of love
Love is the hook by which you can make friends.
Love knows how to make flowers blossom in the winter and in the spring.
Love is the golden key of the Kingdom of God.
Legislations stiffens the mind and wisdom leads to sorrow, but love produces heavenly peace.
The love of God which grants forgiveness is able to conquor all our sins.
Love that suffers is the greatest force of a Christian.
Don't wait to be loved. If you can love, then Love.
Don't wait to receive. If you can give, Give.

This is what Jesus did and He commanded His followers to do the same.

LOVE (III)

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything.

"A guest," I answered, "worthy to be here":
Love said, "You shall be he."
"I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on thee."
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord; but I have marred them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat.

(By George Herbert 1593-1633)