becomes Regent's academic business, while the Regent community, though not itself a church, stands committed to practise Christian togetherness, cooperation, and support in all appropriate forms.

In pursuit of its vision and agenda, Regent College has been fortunate in both its teachers and its students, as also in the high-powered battalion of adjunct professors that it has built up over the years. Regent's unique sense of purpose has attracted an unusually gifted and enterprising cross-section of Christians, and the contents of *Crux*—mainstream evangelical yet not stereotypical; whether opening up the offbeat or reinforcing the conventional, always fresh and interesting—have constantly reflected this.

With Heart, Mind, and Strength: The Best of Crux 1979-89 seeks to cream off especially memorable material in a way that shows what essentially for the past decade Regent College, and *Crux* as its organ of expression, have been about: namely, the many modes of loving work for our God and our neighbour. The need to secure a proper coverage of disciplines and themes and a balanced parade of contributors, plus limitations of space that no form of entrepreneurial horse-trading could overcome, obliged the editor to omit much that he had at first hoped to print. The prominence given to superb articles by the late Klaus Bockmuehl, who edited *Crux* for some years and died in harness in 1989, needs no justification. Academically and spiritually he was a quiet giant, and Regent is poorer for his passing. In token of our gratitude to God for Klaus, this volume is dedicated to his memory.

J.I. Packer

The Great Commandment

Klaus Bockmuehl

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"But when the Pharisees heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they gathered together. Then one of them who was a lawyer, asked him a question, testing him, and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets' " (Matthew 22:34-40).

Jesus is under investigation. A scribe and Pharisee gives him an examination in ethics. He tries to catch him teaching some moral heresy.

But his question concerning which commandment was to be looked at as the highest of them all is at the same time an honest question. Pharisaism reckoned with roughly six hundred commandments, none of which was to be neglected. But could somebody really respect them all alike and to the same extent? Should one not be permitted to assume some order or rank of the commandments? This man, then, addresses to Jesus (the apparent innovator in ethics) a question which he had been discussing long and fruitlessly with his own colleagues.

The scribe here touches on a problem which we also constantly encounter today, even if we do not presuppose six hundred commandments: What is the heart of that large body of timeless and time-conditioned moral postulates? Which of the innumerable possibilities of human existence are we to realize first of all? As human beings, insecure and unfinished by nature, we can never get

rid of the question of ethical preference as long as we have to choose, decide and act, to shape our own lives and to respond to our environment. Therefore, what are we to do above all? That is the honest question of the Pharisee, and it is our constant question, too. Let us try to understand Jesus' answer step by step.

I. "You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

I.a. "...love the Lord your God"

To start with, we need to recognize that Jesus' answer to this basic ethical question was thoroughly traditional, an answer which came from the very heart of the Old Testament. On the one hand, the commandment to love God was part of that fundamental Jewish formula of faith, "Hear, O Israel," (Deuteronomy 6:4). On the other, the commandment to love one's neighbour, found in the so- called Holiness Code (Leviticus 19:18), had long been understood as the summary of the second table of the Ten Commandments, i.e., those commands which cover the relationships between man and fellow man. Jesus, then, gives a totally traditional, non-revolutionary, unsensational, and unproblematic answer.

Unproblematic? According to Luke's report this Pharisee had immediate problems with the concept of neighbour. In Protestantism we do not even get that far. Our first problem arises with the very concept of love of God: Must we, may we, can we even love God? It is an open secret that concerning love of God the Protestant has to go and search for wisdom either in Roman Catholic spirituality, or perhaps with a few mysterious figures in the history of Protestantism who, however, clearly do not represent its mainstream.

Jesus says we are to love God, which is a harrowing postulate, especially today. We live in a climate of atheism, often enough unconsciously practise atheism ourselves, and find ourselves confronted with conscious and theoretical atheism. "We don't need God as a hypothesis" is the tenor of our time. God is no longer the presupposition of human thought, neither in the humanities, nor the social and natural sciences. Even in theology it has become fashionable to call for an understanding of human existence *quasi Deus non daretur,* as if God did not exist. Occasionally, like a voice in the wilderness some poet may cry "It is time to think of God," or a philosopher finds God an object still worthy of study. But to *love* God?—too much seems to speak against that.

In antiquity Aristotle thought it inappropriate to speak of love of God; the leading philosopher of modern times, Kant, resumed this

attitude reasoning that we can only love something that is an object of our senses. Even more influential was the repudiation of love of God by Martin Luther the Reformer. He taught: we cannot love God in his majesty; we must love God in his creatures. God wants to be loved in our afflictions, and in the person of our neighbour, but not directly, without intermediary. Rather, we must love God where we know that he is, i.e., in the preaching of his Word, in our parents and in those in authority over us.

The Protestant Reformation developed this doctrine in reaction to a medieval theory which supposed religious works and love of God to be meritorious and thus had corrupted the doctrine of justification by grace alone. However, as happens so frequently, Protestants have absolutized this Reformational response which made more sense in its relative, immediate historical situation. Modern Protestant theology, adding philosophical and theological arguments, seems to be united in declaring: God can only be loved in the person of our neighbour. Only Karl Barth in his later years, through constant study of Scripture and especially of the Gospel of John, was led to a correction of this position which earlier had also been his own, acknowledging that there is indeed such a thing as love of God and love of Jesus.

We have to put these traditions of our own scribes and elders on the side and recover and preserve the biblical teaching. "You shall love the Lord your God" dominates some of the most important passages of the Old Testament. It is the centerpiece not only of the "Hear, O Israel" but also of the preface to the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5), and returns in a weighty summary at the end of the book of Deuteronomy: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you, life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, *loving the Lord your God,* obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you and length of days . . . "

In the fundamental passage, "Hear, O Israel," the commandment of love of God is the logical consequence of the oneness of God: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord," *therefore* " you shall love the Lord your God." The oneness of God can only be matched by the wholehearted commitment which we describe with the word "love."

This correlation continues in the New Testament. Jesus blames his Jewish adversaries because of their lack of love: "If God were your Father you would love me" (John 8:42). And Paul even calls love of Jesus, God's Son and Messiah, the sign of membership in the

Christian church: "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *anathema,*" i.e., excluded from the church (1 Corinthians 16:22), since those who are called because of divine election would love God. Therefore, too, all things must work together for good to them. God's grace remains unchanged over all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, the Apostle Peter, preempting Kant's dictum, expressly praises those believers as blessed, who love the Lord Jesus without having seen him (1 Peter 1:8). Finally, the passage "the Lord may direct our hearts into the love of God" remains important all the time as it demonstrates that Paul makes love of God the object of his blessing for churches.

However, in spite of all these biblical testimonies, the commandment to love God strikes us as alien, even beyond our inherited philosophical and theological prejudices. It meets human nature like a message from another planet. Is it not utterly strange to our way of thinking that on the one hand we should understand God as Lord, i.e., acknowledge him as the authority above us, and on the other hand love this Lord, love the authority over us? The mind of the twentieth century does not expect to love authorities.

Today, even where the existence of the divine is taken for granted, do we not rather hear the voice of Prometheus, the ancient mythical rebel: "I hate all gods?" Or, if not hate, is it not rather fear of the gods and their unpredictability that dominates the history of religions? Closer to home, in our own time, are not many simply ignorant of God? They don't know what has become of him, and they don't want to know. They don't care. They observe strict neutrality with regard to God. Others again, in their God relationship, resemble marriage partners living in separation: they continue their legal status but are no longer on speaking terms.

Again others in this sequence of attitudes are willing to respect the God and father of Jesus Christ, but they demand that religion be kept in its proper place and don't want to see faith take over direction of a person's life. Some do take trouble with God and strive beyond this well tempered God relationship. But even they seem to be miles away from actually loving God. But the commandment demands nothing less than that. What we thus understand as a pinnacle of piety rarely ever attained, Holy Scripture seems to describe as a normal state of affairs.

The Bible defines loving God making use of three additional qualifications: "with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." We quickly tend to think that Scripture here speaks a bit plerophorically, and what is really meant is just generally a commitment of the whole person. However, the three qualifications

given, point so precisely to three different aspects of the mental and spiritual organization of man that it seems appropriate to look at them individually.

I.b. "... with all your heart"

This phrase envisages the inward center representing the totality of human life, i.e., the commandment to love God addresses the whole content of our life. The heart stands for the person him- or herself: no merely exterior service, only the free self-giving of our will counts. As Calvin put it: love of God is the beginning of all religion for God does not want human obedience that is merely enforced. In biblical thought the heart connotes the will of a person. The commandment therefore aims at conscious, intentional commitment to God. Charles de Foucauld, the saint of the Sahara, frequently emphasized: love must be willed. Under this perspective, love of God turns to obedience. Affective love becomes effective love. We are to love God, like our brethren, not only in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18).

In this way love develops both persistence and faithful service, right in the conditions of every day life. The rapture of passion is converted into sustained work. This is true for human love. The lover builds a dwelling place for the loved one, tries to help the other one, makes the concerns of the beloved his own. It is the same with the love of God: whoever loves God, will take a passionate interest in the state of God's affairs in the whole world, and attempt to further their progress in every field, as best as he can. Love "with all your heart" is active and at work. But it also allows itself to be directed and guided by God. For stubborn love would be a contradiction in itself.

I.c. "... with all your soul"

Soul emphasizes the emotional side, desire, longing, the sentiments.

In this sense, love expresses itself firstly in joy over the beloved. It can be a secret inner glow, but also an enthusiasm shining in the world. Its dedication comes to the fore in a verse like "A day in your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 84:10). Yet the loving soul feels not only joy and admiration, it has a real passion for its object. To love God with all one's soul—the psalmist gave expression to this when he wrote, "As the deer pants for the water brooks so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1f). To "love God with all your soul" means to

think of him at night and in the morning (Psalm 63:6).

Can a person be so captured by God, so exclusively filled by and concerned with him? Do we know God as such a comprehensive and engaging reality? Hebrew poetry says, "Love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame" (Song of Solomon 8:6). Is that our concept of love of God? Do we rejoice with God or suffer with him when his honour, the validity of his commandments, or the advance of his Gospel is at stake? Or do we remain cool with regard to the course of God's concerns in this world? Then we would not love God with all our soul.

Lovers are people of a single topic. To love means to, as it were, move to an "eccentric position," that is to move out of oneself and find one's centre and one's meaning in the other one, in God, no longer within oneself. To love means to put oneself at risk; it has an affinity with the passion of the gambler. Love never settles for mediocrity.

Where passion and the will to act meet we see men of God like the prophet Elijah. Also the martyrs of the church at all times are witnesses of this love, true lovers who would rather be separated from their body than from the One they loved. We should not be surprised to see the half-committed reject those who are fully committed. Are we still able to love, or has our sophistication taken away that ability?

The lover, especially when he has been strengthened by his decision, now dwells somewhere else with his whole heart and soul. But he does not become mindless and inattentive about what he has to do. Rather, even in the tasks of the normal working day he is motivated by the thought of the Beloved, and with the eagerness of love seeks to shape the world for him and for the common future. Whoever loves God, has it as his goal that God's will be done in all his creatures, in his whole creation. He strives to make of each of his works a ministration and "something beautiful for God."

I.d. "... with all your mind"

Love is a sentiment—that we know. It also claims a person's will—that we have heard. But what of the mind, the faculty of thought? Can we love with our thought? Is it not the virtue of the mind and of reason to be without passion? Does it not rather look at the eagerness of love with a hidden smile and a hint of skepticism?

Unfortunately, the history of Christian piety seems to confirm this division. Pietism and other early forms of Evangelicalism reclaimed the love of Jesus which seemed to have been abandoned by the

Reformation. Pietists understood this love primarily as sentiment and also, in some places —we think of their dedication to missions and evangelism—as the surrender of the will, the practical stance which gladly serves Jesus and his commission. But "to love God with all our mind"? For many Evangelicals the world of thought is a remote part of their view of the universe and not easily reached by the transforming power of the gospel.

However, it is quite unacceptable that our minds should be excluded from the rule of God. Reason needs to be put at God's disposal just as much as our other faculties. All the traditional "fear of thought" and the mistrust that piety has often felt towards philosophy, does not justify abstinence from reason and thought. At this point a distinction becomes absolutely necessary, a distinction which Paul already made when he wrote: Our weapons in God's service are strong enough to destroy all "arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." Arguments are being liquidated but the faculty of thinking, the mind, is brought "into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

To love God "with all your mind"—with its choice of expression the Old Testament describes more precisely that type of thought which can become serviceable to the love of God. We could translate the concept appropriately as "practical reason." It denotes the ability to distinguish and the exclusively human faculty to plan and project. The Old Testament uses the very same term in characterizing the "skilled designer" and "every able man in whom the Lord has put ability and intelligence to know how to do any work," i.e., in accordance with the instructions of the Lord, regarding the construction of the sanctuary (Exodus 36:1). In another pertinent passage the term is used of King Solomon in whom was the wisdom of the Lord which enabled him to pronounce righteous judgment.

It is that quality of mind or type of thought that one needs to make the right decisions with a view to one's actions. It is the quick eye of love. Correspondingly, Paul prays for his churches that they might attain precisely this gift, so that their love would "abound still more and more in knowledge and in all discernment" and explicitly in the direction of the "fruit of righteousness" with which they must be adorned for the day of Christ's return (Philippians 1:9-11).

If we are to love God "with all your mind" then this type of love, although passionate, clearly is not blind but circumspect and discerning in the pursuit of its aims.

In summing up: God seeks our counter-love with all the abilities that he has been furnished us with, namely will, feeling, and

thought. Our love is determined, joyful, passionate and circumspect, all at the same time.

We recognize such a comprehensive love in Jesus. He put his whole life at God's disposal; "the life that he lives, he lives to God" (Romans 6:10). He fully observed and implemented the first commandment, passionately serving the one God and no one else beside him. He loved God with all his heart, his soul, and his mind. Such love existed on earth.

Acknowledging this, we arrive at a climax that looks like the final act of the story. Have we described a state of perfection and a way of life that for us must resemble the dream vacation proposed by a colourful brochure, which nevertheless remains financially quite unattainable to us? Is loving God an "impossible possibility"? And yet we are dealing with a divine commandment. So we find ourselves on the horns of a dilemma. With good reason, some theologians therefore immediately interpret this commandment merely in terms of accusation. To love God so completely is impossible to realize. It can only show us what we are lacking. And at this point we need honesty about ourselves before God in order to learn the truth about ourselves: our lack of love for God and our remarkably small willingness and ability to give God more of ourselves. In short, we do love God, yes, but with what strength?

Scripture has a simple and straightforward answer to this question. It observes, "We love him because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). Similarly, in the Old Testament, the fact of God's love is the presupposition of the commandment to love him. Although "heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth and all that is in it" belong to God, "yet the Lord set his heart in love upon your fathers and...descendents..." a small, insignificant nation (Deuteronomy 10:14f.). The commandment to love God meets man as the invitation of him who has said: "My heart yearns for him. I will surely have mercy on him" (Jeremiah 31:20).

Thus our love for God is to be the response to God's love for us. That is what Jesus teaches in his parable of the Two Debtors with the conclusion: He who loves much does so because his many sins have been forgiven (Luke 7:47). Love of God is nothing that we can or should mount from our own resources. Love of God stems from gratitude for forgiveness experienced.

This is supported by another observation: a peculiarity of the text of our passage in the Old Testament Hebrew original points to a parallel in the creation story. It reminds us that the One who gives this commandment is none other than the One who has created the world. "[illegible] shall love God" therefore is also to be understood as:

It shall come to pass that you love God. The commandment of the creator contains a promise. This promise is being fulfilled by the Holy Spirit through whom the love of God has been poured out into our hearts (Romans 5:5). Love is a gift of God himself, a piece of the new world. It is a beginning, certainly beyond our own possibilities, but a beginning for which we can pray just as for all the other gifts of the Spirit.

II. "And the second is like it"

If we found the commandment to love God a controversial topic, this statement of Jesus challenges us once more. The commandment to love God is being called the first and great commandment; but now paradoxically, the second commandment, the command to love our neighbour is to be just as great and important as the first: "This is the first and the great commandment and the second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself." We are faced with the fact that Christian love has *two* objects: God *and* our neighbour.

At this point human reason goes on strike. Ludwig Feuerbach, the great nineteenth century critic of Christianity raised his voice in protest claiming the seemingly obvious objection of logic: You cannot at the same time look at heaven and at the earth unless you are cross-eyed. In the same vein, others in our own time have declared: Love for God is love stolen from one's neighbour.

Martin Luther struggled with this twofold perspective: "Both seem to be against each other. There are two looks in the one word." If you do love God with your whole heart, you no longer have room in your heart, even less your whole heart free for your neighbour. Luther solved the problem by interpreting the *equality* of the two commandments, in the sense taught by Jesus, as an *identity* or sameness: "Jesus melts the two commandments into one and makes them the same work." Perhaps this is a logical consequence of his discounting of the love of God which we mentioned earlier. In reaction against the opposite onesidedness with which people in the Middle Ages, at the expense of neighbourly love put all their energy into works dedicated to God, Luther now demands ministry to the neighbour to such an extent that he turns love of God into love of neighbour. He quotes the proverbial ancient desert saint who had said: "If I spoke with people I could not speak with angels," and replies: "Love your neighbour! With these angels we are to speak!" So the Reformer reflects antithetically the earlier onesidedness which had reduced the double commandment to the commandment to love God.

At this point, we feel some more caution is in place. Certainly, the bond between the two commandments can be cut and one of the two be lost. But if we pursued Luther's argument further we might also have to replace prayer with dialogue with other people, just as it has recently been suggested by some secularist theologians. That is, however, not the intention of the Bible, neither concerning prayer nor regarding love. Unmoved by the objections of reason and human logic the Apostle writes: "And this commandment we have from him: that he who loves God love his brother *also*" (I John 4:21). That is not a bad rendering of the double commandment of the Master himself.

The Pharisee and lawyer had (just like ourselves) asked for *one* highest commandment. Jesus answered with two: there is not only one, but *two greatest* commandments. Although this contradicts our common garden logic and our tendency to reduce everything to a single principle, we simply must learn and hold fast: Christian love, like the ellipse, has two foci. Truth in the New Testament often comprises two apparently competing (if not seeming irreconcilable) concepts. It is like the formula of "two times one hundred percent": one hundred percent justification by grace and one hundred percent sanctification in good works; one hundred percent love of God and one hundred percent love of neighbour. These things cannot be exhausted by our limited and antithetical categories of thought.

Yet even so, a question remains: Is that which seems to be theoretically impossible to the human mind practically possible? The answer is: In the history of Christianity, those who loved God with all their heart, and all their strength also became great benefactors of people. One could mention a number of names but Jesus himself is the best example of the realization of this love; he is the incorporated image of the implementation of the double commandment. He loyally served people *because* he remained faithful to God's commission.

III. "You shall love your neighbour as yourself"

III.a. Love of neighbour, not "self-fulfillment"

Even if the commandment to love God was met with different objections one should think that the commandment to love one's neighbour would receive the undivided applause of everyone. That is not the case, however. A good part of our natural practical behaviour is already adverse to this commandment. "Charity begins at home," we say, and mean: the Ego, "Number One" comes first. On an international level it was revealing to see how the oil

crisis quickly undermined existing alliances. It demonstrated that in moments of decision egoism tends to determine our actions.

But our theories are not much better than that. Some are convinced that, anyway, "Everybody is an island." Others consciously cultivate "splendid isolation" and favour an exclusive life-style. The commandment to love one's neighbour conflicts with the fashionable and pervasive programme of "self-fulfillment." It is being proclaimed and accepted as a great discovery but in truth, it is as old as the mountains: already the ancient philosophy of the Stoa taught that one's conduct of life must foremost serve the development of one's self. Life was to be compared to the expressive action of an artist, as contrasted to that of a physician attending others. Here, the prudent person seeks perfection in himself.

Biblical ethics, on the contrary, points us not to a cultivation of ourselves but to our neighbour. The Creator "commended to each one his neighbour" (Ecclesiastes 17:12). Self-fulfillment of individuals must create havoc in inter-personal relationships, just as national self-fulfillment has created oppression and destruction on an international level. Again, we are to serve our fellow man concretely and not abstract ideals like justice, prudence or general philanthropy. Even Christian activism can fail to meet this commandment as is shown in the following little anecdote: One of my senior friends, a pastor now deceased, once dreamt that he was led into a churchyard and before a tomb. There on the stone he could make out read his name and birthday; the day of his death remained unclear. Below ran the caption: "He was too busy to care for people." From that day on my friend changed his life completely. In order to safeguard us from the mistake of loveless activism Jesus instructed his disciples: "A new commandment I give to you that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34).

III.b. Who is my neighbour?

Once we have established the basic commandment we seem to run immediately into the next problem, i.e., how to define the term neighbour. What does it include or exclude, to what extent will it go, and where are its limits? Again, it is almost natural that the concept of neighbour should be problematic. The ancient Greeks (not much different from ourselves!) thought of social life and loyalties in terms of concentric circles around the ego. Friendships, e.g., would work out best with someone from one's own family or relations, and beyond that perhaps with a person of the same age and the same social standing. The Jews thought similarly. They, too, raised the

question: "Who is my neighbour?" Pharisaism enquired into the limits of love of neighbour and came up with the answer: "You must love your fellow countryman but you may hate your enemy." Indeed, in the Old Testament the neighbour often is the nearest relative, a close friend, the farming neighbour, in short: the members of one's people. Therefore, e.g., it was forbidden to take interest from a fellow Israelite, but not from the stranger.

Many prominent Christian teachers interpret the commandment to love one's neighbour quite in the same fashion. One's neighbours are father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, and children. Especially in the tradition of the Protestant Reformation, love of neighbour is primarily *pietas domestica*, the ethics of the family and the house. True enough! We are to love the people close to us, the younger ones and the older ones that have been committed to our care. To honour our parents with personal attention and interest, granting them fellowship in their old age when they easily become lonely—this understanding of the commandment to love our neighbour is certainly correct and may already prove a tough test of our practical Christianity. But there is still more to it.

We have an authentic interpretation of the concept of neighbour in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. To begin with, Jesus replaces the ego with the neighbour as the centre of our worldview. More over, he explodes the limitations of our natural concept of neighbour. Intentionally, it seems, Jesus chooses for his parable a situation not in the city, or in the house and family but *on the road*. He forces us beyond our homestead horizon. In his parable the neighbour is a stranger. In addition, he is the weak who cannot help himself. Our attention and our help is to be focussed especially on the sick and burdened, on all those whose life is reduced. There is enough misfortune in the world, and people who suffer from it. They need our assistance first. In the intention of Jesus, they are our neighbours. Finally, Christian love of neighbour must necessarily turn to exercising mercy everywhere in actions that aim at sustaining life as were those of the Good Samaritan. Jesus returns to this theme emphatically with his list of the so- called six bodily works of mercy (Matthew 25:31-36): to give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, shelter to the stranger, clothes to the naked, and the fellowship of visiting to those sick and in prison. Jesus is convinced: "You have the poor with you always" (Matthew 26:11); there will always be occasion for acts of mercy. "Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God dwell in him?" (I John 3:17).

The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us, as we have said, to

love the stranger, the foreigner, the one who does not belong to our own in-group, to our own tribe and nation. That reminds us of the remarkable instruction already found in the Old Testament: "Love the sojourner" (Deuteronomy 19:19). It establishes that love is not a "respecter of persons" in the sense of assessing their worth. Christian love differs from its ancient counter- image in that it does not only love the good, beautiful, dignified, useful, or that of related stock; it simply does not first make up an account of values, but then it also does not change when the neighbour changes. It serves everybody who needs our help, without partiality (James 2:1). As the parable of the Good Samaritan indicates and Jesus teaches on another occasion, Christian love even applies to the enemy and the persecutor. The Christian is to become a neighbour in a way which exceeds the limited ideals of Jews and Greeks.

The parable of the Good Samaritan also assumes the object of love's concern, the neighbour, is an individual human being and not a situation. The Good Samaritan does not first inaugurate a survey to analyse the situation; he does not rush back to Jerusalem in order to call for a thorough purging of the area of all bandits. He tends to the wounded before him. He does not think in terms of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." The individuality of his love is obvious. In the eyes of Jesus love is not in the first place concerned with changing structures but with relief for the concretely suffering neighbour.

III.c. What does it mean to *love* one's neighbour?

If we continue to follow the parable of Jesus, love begins with seeing, with perception of persons, with attention for the need of a neighbour. Parallel to the qualities of love for God, love of neighbour combines affective compassion, determined action, and circumspection in the situation and beyond it. Love of neighbour is service. The Good Samaritan characteristically already fulfills Paul's rule, "Bear one another's burden, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). In doing so, he generously puts his possessions at the disposal of his neighbour: his own donkey, wine and oil are immediately made available; money plays a role, too, not to speak of the time the benefactor loses. Love of neighbour means: to go out of one's way and to make the other's concern and need one's own. Here, indeed, is a man who not only looks towards his own interest, but also towards the interest of the other one, according to the example of Jesus (Philippians 2:4f).

The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us, as we have seen, that love of neighbour according to Jesus is primarily concerned with

the sustaining of life, with concern for the essentials of our neighbour's existence. We are to look after his fundamental needs. The parable clearly points to the needs of the body and to material provisions. No one who has listened to Jesus' parable will bypass and ignore this basic level.

However, the ministry of love cannot be limited to material assistance alone. Our neighbour has been entrusted to us at the same time with regard to the sustenance and growth of his spiritual life, his participation in the Kingdom of God, and his ongoing assimilation to Jesus Christ. The overall intention is that God's will may be done in the life of our neighbour just as in our own lives. Jesus looked after both the spiritual and physical needs of people. To love means to take responsibility for people, responsibility for their complete restoration.

Finally, love must be realized as we go. Let us not think that we shall do the good deeds once we have reached a certain goal or a higher level of spirituality in our own lives. It is a temptation to think like that. For the Christian, any time, any place, including the road, the secular locale, presents the location for love and service.

In order to open our eyes for our opportunities, Martin Luther insisted that we should serve our neighbour with the special gifts with which God has equipped us. He wrote: "If there is anything in us, it is God's gift and not our own. We owe it to the service of love and the law of Christ. I must use it to serve others and not myself. Thus my knowledge is not mine but belongs to those who are ignorant; I am their debtor. Similarly, whatever wisdom I have belongs to the unwise, whatever power, to the oppressed, whatever riches I have, to the poor, and my righteousness to the sinners, in order to sustain them all."

Love begins with the prayer of intercession. It opens our eyes to that which is necessary. It almost goes without saying that the merciful ministry of Christian love does not represent either a masochistic self-abasement and servility, as the anti-Christian philosopher Nietzsche branded it, or an act of patronizing condescension, as Kant saw it. Both interpretations would not apply to the action, e.g., of a physician either. Christian ministry is essentially comparable to medical action. It is an act freely undertaken by which we participate both in God's work of preservation and in Christ's work of salvation.

III.d. "...as yourself"

Again, the little phrase calls for precise attention as it represents a furt' stumbling block. We usually pick this sentence up with a

slight reinterpretation as if it read: You shall love your neighbour *and* yourself. Many even say that one must *first* learn to love oneself before one can love others, and psychologists and counselors recommend "self-acceptance." It seems to be natural that in this respect everybody look after himself first. The debate over the interpretation of "as yourself" also had a prominent place in the history of theology. Did it mean that both were commanded, to love our neighbour *and* ourselves, or that we were told to love our neighbour according to the love that we have for ourselves?

Clearly, the latter is what the text says. "As yourself" defines the mode and not a second object of love. It states an exact parallelism to Christ's Golden Rule which says that we are to love our neighbour according to the example of love that we already have for ourselves. "Whatever you want men to do you, you also do to them" (Matthew 7:12). That is the proper interpretation of "as yourself."

It is only through the Protestant Reformation that this understanding came to prominence again. In his expositions of Romans, Galatians, and the parable of the Good Samaritan, Martin Luther again and again argued in this direction: "What do you do for yourself? Well, whatever you do for yourself, you should also do for your neighbour. You certainly don't let yourself go hungry, but look after your body with garment, food, and rest, in illness you look after your health, you pray for yourself and ask for grace and that you may understand God's Word. Do all this also for your neighbour!"

In ourselves we possess the most instructive example and an ever present monitor; our own experience testifies to what we owe our neighbour at any given moment. Love of neighbour does not need books and experts. Whoever follows this commandment knows from his own life what is necessary. He makes his neighbour equal to himself in his needs exactly as Paul demands in his exhortations for the collection taken for Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8 and 9). This interpretation seems to be confirmed also by the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament passage (Leviticus 19:18). An exact translation would run as follows: "Love your neighbour according to what or how you [are]." That is why Martin Buber, the famous Jewish philosopher rendered this text with the unforgettable words: "Love your neighbour. He is like you."

We have heard the clear, uncompromising divine command: "You shall love your neighbour." But even if we are agreed on its theoretical understanding, we are still a long way from actually practising it. With a view to the commandment the question once more arrives: but how, by what strength? Again here, we easily find ourselves on a level below neighbourly love, whether we hate our

neighbour or think little of him or don't register him at all, or just tolerate him one way or other. All that is less than love. Honest people will admit that sometimes it requires them to make an effort to go beyond tolerance and neutrality to a positive, living relationship even with the people nearest to them. But if it already takes an effort in the family, what about the sick, the stranger and the enemy? Our forefathers said: look at the Ten Commandments and you will see that you have sinned against love.

What is to be done? Our gracious God knows that at this point we are in need of a motivation which we cannot generate ourselves. Therefore already the Old Testament points to God's steadfast love and mercy, by which he saved Israel from Egypt, from the house of bondage, as the foundation of love of neighbour. Jesus seems to indicate the same in his parable of the master of the merciless servant: "I forgave you all your debt. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant?" (Matthew 18:32f.). That is God speaking. He lets us understand: Love of neighbour, too, arises from gratitude for forgiveness experienced. This also settles the frequent objection that one has to struggle to become a self first before one can love one's neighbour, because this commandment rests on the presupposition that God loves us, that we are already being loved, that we are already somebody, that we have dignity because of God's gift. That is why one no longer needs to battle to establish oneself but can forget oneself and begin to make the other one great.

IV. "On these two commandments hang all the Law and Prophets"

Jesus concludes his answer to the question of the Pharisee with an additional proposition. It deals with the relationship of law and love. It challenges another common contemporary prejudice. It describes the Double Commandment of Love as the focus of concentration of the law, and the law as the unfolding of love.

Our own time finds it difficult to accept a positive relationship between love and law. We tend to think that legalism necessarily is lovelessness, that the law is against love and love against law. At best we are willing to compare law and love with cocoon and butterfly or with dregs and wine. The Old and New Testaments have it—he who has ears to hear, let him hear—*differently.* The whole law, Jesus says, hangs on love like a door on its hinges. Correspondingly Paul writes: "Owe no one anything but to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law," and continues "And for this, ' shall not bear false witness, you shall not covet,' and if

there is any other commandment, it is *summed up* in this saying, namely, you shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Romans 13:8-10).

Love has a precise *organic* relationship to the law: it "recapitulates" the law, comprises its ordinances as in a summary. Love is the head, the commandments are the body and its members, just like according to Ephesians 1:10, all things in heaven and on earth are gathered together in one, i.e., Christ.

The Double Commandment of Love relates to the individual commandments, e.g. the Ten Commandments, like the source of the river. Love remains the ground and rule of the law. All individual commandments must be understood and interpreted from the commandment of love. We see this in the way Christ handles the Sabbath commandment. Love is the "royal law" (James 2:8).

Love relates to the individual commandments like the revealed formula of a curve which previously was only known by a number of mathematical points. Similarly, one could describe love's relationship to the commandments using the image of a circle surrounded by tangents. The commandments are so many descriptions of places of love, limitations of a rigid kind, "definitions," approximations, auxiliary devices, attempts to, for the time being, comprehend the living thing using lifeless concepts. The commandments can only "circumscribe" the perfection of love. The law is the framework of love. It describes the terrain in which love will be active.

For the coordination of law and love, then, the following two statements are valid and in order:

First, love unfolds into the commandments. They serve it. The commandments are the shoes of love in which it walks through the working day. Luther, as always, has a stringent little example: the mother demands of her daughter that she love her, nothing else. But then, practically, the daughter shall help with the cooking and milk the cow. Will she also do that or grumble when love becomes concrete? "Thus God posits commandments manifold, but he only wants to test our love and give us opportunities to implement it." The works of the commandments are the outflow of love. That does away with *antinomianism,* the imagination that love stands for lawlessness.

Second, conversely, all commandments aim at love as their perfection (1 Timothy 1:5). That does away with *legalism,* the idea that biblical ethics consist of a mere observation of the commandments.

Love never goes hand in hand with lawlessness. It is in alliance with the law and the prophets. According to a memorable word of Jesus (Matthew 24:12), love will grow cold when (and because)

lawlessness will abound. This establishes that love cannot coexist with lawlessness.

"If you love me, keep my commandments," says Jesus (John 14:15). The law is to the activity of love what canvas is to needlework. From the education by the commandments grows the discipline which is necessary for the ministry of love in service and missions, just as abstinence and prayer correspond with each other. Thus, the law is no longer a purpose in itself. It names the norms of preparation for the service of love in the discipleship of Jesus. Whosoever loves him, will keep his commandments.

The Ten Commandments: Are They Still Valid?

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Are the ten commandments still valid for us today? Are they valid only for Christians, or for all people? Or are they perhaps only for Jews and pagans, but not for Christians? And is it merely piety or the inertia of conservatism that keeps them in our catechism, in the doctrinal strong-room of the church? Are they still with us simply because no one has dared to question the ancient moral habits of the church? Wouldn't a business, eager to rationalize for the sake of success, have long ago cleared them out and relegated them to a museum of the ancient Near East?

Some prominent speakers in the church have come to just this conclusion and caught the headlines with it. One, a German church president, stated that it was impossible to prescribe a catalogue of eternal norms of conduct; rather, the Christian was to decide in the given situation what love would command him or her to do. Therefore, when it came to personal ethics, the decalogue was out of the question. On another occasion this same man said that it was equally impossible in a pluralistic society to accept the ten commandments as the basis for social morality and the law of the state—something most countries took for granted until very recently.

Another Protestant ethicist, with earned doctorates in theology and sociology, brought his sociological thinking to bear on the decalogue. Calling the ten commandments "those ancient norms" and "a nomad law," he relativized them historically and sociologically. The civilized world of the industrial age was too far removed from the world of the ten commandments: they could hardly help us, let alone be authoritative. They were, rather, a hindrance to modern life.