

The Love That Builds: An Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13

By Tom Pfothenauer

[Michigan District Pastor-Teacher Conference Saginaw, Michigan June 15-17,1971]

Preface

It is not difficult to find reasons for a consideration of the subject of Christian love by a Pastor-Teacher Conference. Perhaps the most compelling reason for a consideration of love is that the Lord Jesus expects that His followers will love Him. In John 14:23,24 our Lord Jesus says, "If you love Me, you'll do what I say, and My Father will love you, and We will come to you and live with you. Anyone who doesn't love Me doesn't do what I say." Using these words as part of a text for a Pentecost sermon, C.F.W. Walther, the great orthodox Lutheran theologian and preacher, states,

"...faith... fills the heart with love to Christ, a love not only of words, but an inner living power, showing itself in deeds. It is a love which not only makes one willing but also capable of keeping Christ's word. The Lord expressly adds in the following verse, 'He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.' V.24a"¹

There are further reasons why a study of love in the Biblical perspective is important for the Church today. 1) Misguided concepts as to the nature of love are creating unwholesome effects in our flocks, particularly amongst the young. We have in mind the so-called "situation ethics" or "new morality". 2)The word "Love" crops up again and again in the plans and reports of modern ecumenicists. Examples by the hundreds could be offered. We cite (in part) but one from a recent report found in the *Ottawa Journal*:

"For the first time in history, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian and Evangelical Protestant Christians joined here in a 'Meeting of Love.'

"The late January program marked three observances: the Week of Prayer for Christian unity, the feast of St. John Chrysostom and the 22nd anniversary of the elevation of Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras 1 to the throne of Constantinople (Istanbul)....

"In order to stop lancing Christ in our land,' said the proclamation, 'laymen representing all churches have undertaken to organize this first Meeting of Love,'...

"Worshippers recited together the Lord's Prayer and the 25th chapter of the Gospel of John.

"Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras sent the following message: 'In the love of Christ we greet all those present in this Meeting of Love. The Lord has willed this gathering. Let us meet each other in love, according to His commandment...."

For confessional reasons we of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod need to keep a clear understanding of the Scriptural concept of love. 3) In receiving this assignment it was stated that the Program Committee wished to have an exegetical study that would dovetail with a presentation on Christian Stewardship and also a study on the Third Use of the Law. It was agreed that 1 Corinthians, chapter 13 might well serve to achieve this purpose.---No doubt you could bring many more reasons why the study of Christian love is a timely one. However, our primary purpose for studying love today is that we might be built up in our common salvation. "...now I entrust you to God and to the Word of His love, which can build you up..." (Acts 20:32). With this

¹ C.F. Walther, *Old Standard Gospels*, Part 1, Translated by Donald E. Heck, (mimeographed), p.191

thought in mind we consider,

The Love That Builds

King James Version

1 Corinthians: 13

- 1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.
- 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.
- 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.
- 4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,
- 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;
- 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
- 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
- 8 Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.
- 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.
- 10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.
- 11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.
- 12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.
- 13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

J.B. Phillips

If I were to speak with the combined eloquence of men and angels I should stir men like a fanfare of trumpets or the crashing of cymbals, but unless I had love, I should do nothing more, If I had the gift of foretelling the future and had in my mind not only all human knowledge but the secrets of God, and if, in addition, I had the absolute faith which can move mountains, but had no love, I tell you I should amount to nothing at all. If I were to sell all my possessions to feed the hungry and, for my convictions, allowed my body to be burned, and yet had no love, I should achieve precisely nothing.

This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience--it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.

Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails.

Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen. For if there are prophecies they will be fulfilled and done with, if there are "tongues" the need for them will disappear, if there is knowledge it will be swallowed up in truth. For our knowledge is always incomplete and our prophecy is always incomplete, and when the complete comes, that is the end of the incomplete.

When I was a little child I talked and felt and thought like a little child. Now that I am a

man my childish speech and feeling and thought have no further significance for me.

At present we are men looking at puzzling reflections in a mirror. The time will come when we shall see reality whole and face to face! At present all I know is a little fraction of the truth, but the time will come when I shall know it as fully as God now knows me!

In this life we have three great lasting qualities--faith, hope and love. But the greatest of them is love.

Wm. F. Beck

If I speak the languages of men. and of angels and don't have any love, I've become a loud gong or a clashing cymbal. Even if I speak God's Word and know every kind of hidden truth and have every kind of knowledge, even if I have all the faith to move mountains but don't have any love, I'm nothing. Even if I give away all I have to feed the hungry and give up my body but only to boast and don't have any love, it doesn't help me.

Love is patient. Love is kind. Love isn't jealous. It doesn't brag or get conceited. It isn't indecent. It isn't selfish. It doesn't get angry. It doesn't plan to hurt anyone. It doesn't delight in evil but is happy with the truth. It bears everything, believes everything, hopes for everything, endures everything.

Love never dies. If there are prophecies, they will come to an end. Or strange languages, they will stop. Or knowledge it will vanish. We learn only a part of anything and prophesy only a part. But when that which is perfect comes, what is only a part will vanish. When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, think like a child, plan like a child. Now that I'm a man, I've given up the ways of a child. Now we see by a mirror and are puzzled, but then we'll see face to face. Now I learn only a part of anything, out then I'll know as He has known me. And now these three, faith, hope, and love, go on, but the most important of these is love.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

The letter of 1st Corinthians begins, "Paul, Apostle of Christ Jesus, called by God's will, and Sosthenes, my fellow worker, to God's church in Corinth,..." (I Cor. 1:1 Beck tr.). Sosthenes is mentioned, "Not as a joint composer, but as a fellow-worker, as a witness and approver of the contents of the epistle."² Whether he is the same man mentioned in Acts 18:17 is not known. Conceivably, he served as the amanuensis (secretary) for Paul. The entire letter was dictated and then authenticated with Paul's autographic signature and greeting. That this was standard procedure with Paul we learn from II Thessalonians 3:17 where he writes, "I'm writing this greeting with my own--that is, Paul's--hand. By this you can recognize every letter: This is my handwriting." Paul's greeting found at the end of 1 Corinthians is significant for our study since it aids us to understanding the Apostle's concept of love. It reads: "Here is the greeting that I Paul, write with my own hand. If anyone doesn't love the Lord, a curse on him! Our Lord, come! May the Lord Jesus love you! May love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen." (16:21-24).

Paul had come to the city of Corinth about 50 or 51 A.D. His efforts to establish the church there are described in Acts, chapter 18. There he met the Jew Aquilla and his wife Priscilla, fellow tent makers. Until Silas and Timothy joined him, Paul tried to win Jews and Greeks, meeting with them each Saturday in the Synagogue. For a time he worked full-time trying to win over the Jews to Jesus. When they rejected his message, Paul informed them, "From now on I'll go to the non-Jews" (Acts 18:6). After that "...many other people in Corinth who heard Paul believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). He taught God's Word among the people for a period of eighteen months.

Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians, from Ephesus at the end of his three years' sojourn, chap.

² Paul E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible*, Vol. II, P.87

16:3,4,8,19, probably about Easter of the year 56 A.D. The letter was very likely delivered to the congregation at Corinth through their own representatives, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, chap. 16:15-17, or through Timothy, chap. 4:17; 16:10,3.

What kind of a city was ancient Corinth? One description reads, "Corinth was the commercial center of Greece, but also a hotbed of corruption and vice, 'the heiress of a glorious history, whose monuments in metal and marble glorified the gods of Greece; the mother of thriving colonies and the capital of the roman province of Achaia; an emporium of the world's commerce, swarming with strangers and workers in various manufactures; a queen of style and of luxury, teeming with voluptuousness and lasciviousness, her idolatry horrible lewdness, in consequence of which the Corinthian custom had become proverbial even among the heathen to designate the acme of baseness; reveling in riches and incidentally full of the misery of abused slaves, also intoxicated with the conceit of wisdom and the enjoyment of art'"³

Perhaps it will be helpful in our understanding of chapter 13 to know something about the congregation in Corinth. What kind of a congregation was it? What conditions prevailed at the time Paul wrote to them. What were some of the problems plaguing these believers?

Paul's converts were mainly Gentiles, who for the most part, belonged to the poorer classes of society. The members of the Corinthian congregation, due, in part, to their environment, were subject to arrogance and self-conceit, chap. 1,17: 8,1, and had not yet fully thrown off the dominance of sins of unchastity, chap. 5: 1-11; 6: 15-18; 11:21. After Paul's ministry in Corinth, the eloquent Apollos took his place, chap. 3: 5-9, (cf. Acts 18:24-19:1) In the course of the next years some Jewish Christians also came to Corinth, belonging to the Judaizing class, boasting of their intimacy with Peter and James, insisting upon the keeping of the ceremonial law, questioning Paul's apostleship, and otherwise scattering the seeds of dissension. On this account, and because many of the Corinthian Christians were unduly influenced by the brilliancy of Apollos, factions were forming in the congregation which tended to disrupt the entire work of Paul, chap. 1:10-12; 3:3,4,21,22; 4:1-5; 1:18. As a result, various evils appeared, such as laxity in church discipline, chap. 5:1-5; a growing indifference with regard to the sins of unchastity, chap. 6:9, 13-19; members of the congregation brought suits in the civil courts against one another, chap. 6:1; Christian liberty was abused by participation in feasts of idolatry, chap. 8:10; the celebration of the Holy Communion was desecrated through abuses and uncharitable behavior, chap. 11:17-22. In chapter 15:12 we read that some even denied the resurrection of the dead.

These disquieting facts had been brought to the attention of Paul, partly through individual members of the Corinthian congregation, chap. 1:11; 5:1; 11:18; 15:12; partly through a letter which the Corinthian Christians had addressed to him with questions concerning celibacy, divorce, the eating of meat from heathen sacrifices, and the use of the gifts of the Spirit.

The situation in Corinth becomes clearer when we read II Cor., chap. 11 and 12. Here Paul defends his ministry against the "super" apostles (cf. II Cor. 11:5) who were invading the congregation. In this connection, Calvin W. Niewenhuis states: "A key to understanding the Corinthian letters is that Paul was held by some to be deficient in spiritual power and that the full Gospel was more than what Paul brought."⁴ Further on in his article Niewenhuis states, "At Corinth various Christians followed the "super fine" apostles. They earnestly sought additional Christian experiences and assurances, signs and evidences. They exalted in the spectacular gifts of the Spirit such as that of tongues or languages."⁵ This helps us to understand Paul's emphasis in chapters 12 & 14. The wonderful gifts of the Holy Spirit, bestowed upon some of them, were not always being used for the edification of the entire congregation.

For their learning Paul instructs the Corinthians "about the gifts of the Spirit" (12:1). The same Spirit had given these gifts to different persons (12:4). Paul lists some of the gifts of the Spirit: "to speak of wisdom;" "to speak intelligently;" "Faith;" "the ability to heal;" "work miracles;" "speak God's Word;" "tell the true Spirit

³ Ibid., p.86

⁴ Calvin W. Niewenhuis, "A Peek at Pentecostalism," *The Christian Reformed Outlook*, quoted in the May 24,1971, *The Christian News*

⁵ Ibid.

from evil spirits;" "talk strange languages" (chap. 12). The same God had appointed in the church, apostles, preachers, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, managers, speakers of strange languages (V.28).

By way of analogy Paul compares the unity in multiformity to be found in the human body to the unity in diversity pertaining in the Body of Christ (the Christian Church). After pointing out the importance of all the various members of the human body Paul says to the Corinthians, "Now, you are the body of Christ, and everyone has his place in it" (V. 27). All these spiritual gifts were given for the welfare of "the body of Christ" (V. 27). They were given to create unity, not disparity leading to disruption.

Paul concludes chapter 12 urging the Corinthians to "...try to have the better gifts (V.31). What is meant by the better gifts we learn from chap.14 where they are urged, "especially to speak God's Word" (V. 1). Then follows a discussion of the gift of speaking "strange languages" in which Paul puts the use of this gift into its proper perspective. In the last section of chapter 14 Paul urges the Corinthians to keep order in their worship gatherings.

What was the concern motivating the thinking of Paul in chapters 12-14? It was to strengthen and solidify his fellow saints in Corinth. Note the expressions denoting this idea of building up the church of God in these chapters: "Ways of serving" (12:5); "make him useful." (12:7); "...help them grow," (14:3); "...encourage yourself." (14:4); "help the church grow." (15:5); "...I help you" (14:6); "...talk with a clear meaning," (14:9); "...build up the church." (14:12); "...help" (14:17); "...help one another grow." (14:27).

It is in the midst of this discussion of the reception and use of gifts of the Spirit that St. Paul introduces his well-known psalm of love with the words: "And now I'll show you the best way of all" (12:31).

Chapter 13 falls into three divisions: Vv. 1-3, Without love--nothing; Vv. 4-7, "Love is..."; Vv. 8-13, Love never ends.

1 CORINTHIANS, CHAPTER 13

A key word in this chapter is **The Love That Builds: An Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13**

By Tom Pfothenauer

[Michigan District Pastor-Teacher Conference Saginaw, Michigan June 15-17,1971]

Preface

It is not difficult to find reasons for a consideration of the subject of Christian love by a Pastor-Teacher Conference. Perhaps the most compelling reason for a consideration of love is that the Lord Jesus expects that His followers will love Him. In John 14:23,24 our Lord Jesus says, "If you love Me, you'll do what I say, and My Father will love you, and We will come to you and live with you. Anyone who doesn't love Me doesn't do what I say." Using these words as part of a text for a Pentecost sermon, C.F.W.Walther, the great orthodox Lutheran theologian and preacher, states,

"...faith... fills the heart with love to Christ, a love not only of words, but an inner living power, showing itself in deeds. It is a love which not only makes one willing but also capable of keeping Christ's word. The Lord expressly adds in the following verse, 'He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.' V.24a"⁶

⁶ C.F.Walther, *Old Standard Gospels*, Part 1, Translated by Donald E. Heck, (mimeographed), p.191

There are further reasons why a study of love in the Biblical perspective is important for the Church today. 1) Misguided concepts as to the nature of love are creating unwholesome effects in our flocks, particularly amongst the young. We have in mind the so-called "situation ethics" or "new morality". 2) The word "Love" crops up again and again in the plans and reports of modern ecumenicists. Examples by the hundreds could be offered. We cite (in part) but one from a recent report found in the *Ottawa Journal*:

"For the first time in history, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian and Evangelical Protestant Christians joined here in a 'Meeting of Love.'

"The late January program marked three observances: the Week of Prayer for Christian unity, the feast of St. John Chrysostom and the 22nd anniversary of the elevation of Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras 1 to the throne of Constantinople (Istanbul)....

"'In order to stop lancing Christ in our land,' said the proclamation, 'laymen representing all churches have undertaken to organize this first Meeting of Love,'...

"Worshippers recited together the Lord's Prayer and the 25th chapter of the Gospel of John.

"Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras sent the following message: 'In the love of Christ we greet all those present in this Meeting of Love. The Lord has willed this gathering. Let us meet each other in love, according to His commandment....'"

For confessional reasons we of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod need to keep a clear understanding of the Scriptural concept of love. 3) In receiving this assignment it was stated that the Program Committee wished to have an exegetical study that would dovetail with a presentation on Christian Stewardship and also a study on the Third Use of the Law. It was agreed that 1 Corinthians, chapter 13 might well serve to achieve this purpose.---No doubt you could bring many more reasons why the study of Christian love is a timely one. However, our primary purpose for studying love today is that we might be built up in our common salvation. "...now I entrust you to God and to the Word of His love, which can build you up..." (Acts 20:32). With this thought in mind we consider,

The Love That Builds

King James Version

1 Corinthians: 13

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

8 Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then

shall I know even as also I am known.

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

J.B. Phillips

If I were to speak with the combined eloquence of men and angels I should stir men like a fanfare of trumpets or the crashing of cymbals, but unless I had love, I should do nothing more, If I had the gift of foretelling the future and had in my mind not only all human knowledge but the secrets of God, and if, in addition, I had the absolute faith which can move mountains, but had no love, I tell you I should amount to nothing at all. If I were to sell all my possessions to feed the hungry and, for my convictions, allowed my body to be burned, and yet had no love, I should achieve precisely nothing.

This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience--it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.

Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails.

Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen. For if there are prophecies they will be fulfilled and done with, if there are "tongues" the need for them will disappear, if there is knowledge it will be swallowed up in truth. For our knowledge is always incomplete and our prophecy is always incomplete, and when the complete comes, that is the end of the incomplete.

When I was a little child I talked and felt and thought like a little child. Now that I am a man my childish speech and feeling and thought have no further significance for me.

At present we are men looking at puzzling reflections in a mirror. The time will come when we shall see reality whole and face to face! At present all I know is a little fraction of the truth, but the time will come when I shall know it as fully as God now knows me!

In this life we have three great lasting qualities--faith, hope and love. But the greatest of them is love.

Wm. F. Beck

If I speak the languages of men. and of angels and don't have any love, I've become a loud gong or a clashing cymbal. Even if I speak God's Word and know every kind of hidden truth and have every kind of knowledge, even if I have all the faith to move mountains but don't have any love, I'm nothing. Even if I give away all I have to feed the hungry and give up my body but only to boast and don't have any love, it doesn't help me.

Love is patient. Love is kind. Love isn't jealous. It doesn't brag or get conceited. It isn't indecent. It isn't selfish. It doesn't get angry. It doesn't plan to hurt anyone. It doesn't delight in evil but is happy with the truth. It bears everything, believes everything, hopes for everything, endures everything.

Love never dies. If there are prophecies, they will come to an end. Or strange languages, they will stop. Or knowledge it will vanish. We learn only a part of anything and prophesy only a part. But when that which is perfect comes, what is only a part will vanish. When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, think like a child, plan like a child. Now that I'm a man, I've given up the ways of a child. Now we see by a mirror and are puzzled, but then we'll see face to face. Now I learn only a part of anything, out then I'll know as He has known me. And now these three,

faith, hope, and love, go on, but the most important of these is love.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

The letter of 1st Corinthians begins, "Paul, Apostle of Christ Jesus, called by God's will, and Sosthenes, my fellow worker, to God's church in Corinth,..." (I Cor. 1:1 Beck tr.). Sosthenes is mentioned, "Not as a joint composer, but as a fellow-worker, as a witness and approver of the contents of the epistle."⁷ Whether he is the same man mentioned in Acts 18:17 is not known. Conceivably, he served as the amanuensis (secretary) for Paul. The entire letter was dictated and then authenticated with Paul's autographic signature and greeting. That this was standard procedure with Paul we learn from II Thessalonians 3:17 where he writes, "I'm writing this greeting with my own--that is, Paul's--hand. By this you can recognize every letter: This is my handwriting." Paul's greeting found at the end of 1 Corinthians is significant for our study since it aids us to understanding the Apostle's concept of love. It reads: "Here is the greeting that I Paul, write with my own hand. If anyone doesn't love the Lord, a curse on him! Our Lord, come! May the Lord Jesus love you! May love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen." (16:21-24).

Paul had come to the city of Corinth about 50 or 51 A.D. His efforts to establish the church there are described in Acts, chapter 18. There he met the Jew Aquilla and his wife Priscilla, fellow tent makers. Until Silas and Timothy joined him, Paul tried to win Jews and Greeks, meeting with them each Saturday in the Synagogue. For a time he worked full-time trying to win over the Jews to Jesus. When they rejected his message, Paul informed them, "From now on I'll go to the non-Jews" (Acts 18:6). After that "...many other people in Corinth who heard Paul believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). He taught God's Word among the people for a period of eighteen months.

Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians, from Ephesus at the end of his three years' sojourn, chap. 16:3,4,8,19, probably about Easter of the year 56 A.D. The letter was very likely delivered to the congregation at Corinth through their own representatives, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, chap. 16:15-17, or through Timothy, chap. 4:17; 16:10,3.

What kind of a city was ancient Corinth? One description reads, "Corinth was the commercial center of Greece, but also a hotbed of corruption and vice, 'the heiress of a glorious history, whose monuments in metal and marble glorified the gods of Greece; the mother of thriving colonies and the capital of the roman province of Achaia; an emporium of the world's commerce, swarming with strangers and workers in various manufactures; a queen of style and of luxury, teeming with voluptuousness and lasciviousness, her idolatry horrible lewdness, in consequence of which the Corinthian custom had become proverbial even among the heathen to designate the acme of baseness; reveling in riches and incidentally full of the misery of abused slaves, also intoxicated with the conceit of wisdom and the enjoyment of art'"⁸

Perhaps it will be helpful in our understanding of chapter 13 to know something about the congregation in Corinth. What kind of a congregation was it? What conditions prevailed at the time Paul wrote to them. What were some of the problems plaguing these believers?

Paul's converts were mainly Gentiles, who for the most part, belonged to the poorer classes of society. The members of the Corinthian congregation, due, in part, to their environment, were subject to arrogance and self-conceit, chap. 1,17: 8,1, and had not yet fully thrown off the dominance of sins of unchastity, chap. 5: 1-11; 6: 15-18; 11:21. After Paul's ministry in Corinth, the eloquent Apollos took his place, chap. 3: 5-9, (cf. Acts 18:24-19:1) In the course of the next years some Jewish Christians also came to Corinth, belonging to the Judaizing class, boasting of their intimacy with Peter and James, insisting upon the keeping of the ceremonial law, questioning Paul's apostleship, and otherwise scattering the seeds of dissension. On this account, and because many of the Corinthian Christians were unduly influenced by the brilliancy of Apollos, factions were forming in the congregation which tended to disrupt the entire work of Paul, chap. 1:10-12;

⁷ Paul E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible*, Vol. II, P.87

⁸ Ibid., p.86

3:3,4,21,22; 4:1-5; 1:18. As a result, various evils appeared, such as laxity in church discipline, chap. 5:1-5; a growing indifference with regard to the sins of unchastity, chap. 6:9, 13-19; members of the congregation brought suits in the civil courts against one another, chap. 6:1; Christian liberty was abused by participation in feasts of idolatry, chap. 8:10; the celebration of the Holy Communion was desecrated through abuses and uncharitable behavior, chap. 11:17-22. In chapter 15:12 we read that some even denied the resurrection of the dead.

These disquieting facts had been brought to the attention of Paul, partly through individual members of the Corinthian congregation, chap. 1:11; 5:1; 11:18; 15:12; partly through a letter which the Corinthian Christians had addressed to him with questions concerning celibacy, divorce, the eating of meat from heathen sacrifices, and the use of the gifts of the Spirit.

The situation in Corinth becomes clearer when we read II Cor., chap. 11 and 12. Here Paul defends his ministry against the "super" apostles (cf. II Cor. 11:5) who were invading the congregation. In this connection, Calvin W. Niewenhuis states: "A key to understanding the Corinthian letters is that Paul was held by some to be deficient in spiritual power and that the full Gospel was more than what Paul brought."⁹ Further on in his article Niewenhuis states, "At Corinth various Christians followed the "super fine" apostles. They earnestly sought additional Christian experiences and assurances, signs and evidences. They exalted in the spectacular gifts of the Spirit such as that of tongues or languages."¹⁰ This helps us to understand Paul's emphasis in chapters 12 & 14. The wonderful gifts of the Holy Spirit, bestowed upon some of them, were not always being used for the edification of the entire congregation.

For their learning Paul instructs the Corinthians "about the gifts of the Spirit" (12:1). The same Spirit had given these gifts to different persons (12:4). Paul lists some of the gifts of the Spirit: "to speak of wisdom;" "to speak intelligently;" "Faith;" "the ability to heal;" "work miracles;" "speak God's Word;" "tell the true Spirit from evil spirits;" "talk strange languages" (chap. 12). The same God had appointed in the church, apostles, preachers, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, managers, speakers of strange languages (V.28).

By way of analogy Paul compares the unity in multiformity to be found in the human body to the unity in diversity pertaining in the Body of Christ (the Christian Church). After pointing out the importance of all the various members of the human body Paul says to the Corinthians, "Now, you are the body of Christ, and everyone has his place in it" (V. 27). All these spiritual gifts were given for the welfare of "the body of Christ" (V. 27). They were given to create unity, not disparity leading to disruption.

Paul concludes chapter 12 urging the Corinthians to "...try to have the better gifts (V.31). What is meant by the better gifts we learn from chap.14 where they are urged, "especially to speak God's Word" (V. 1). Then follows a discussion of the gift of speaking "strange languages" in which Paul puts the use of this gift into its proper perspective. In the last section of chapter 14 Paul urges the Corinthians to keep order in their worship gatherings.

What was the concern motivating the thinking of Paul in chapters 12-14? It was to strengthen and solidify his fellow saints in Corinth. Note the expressions denoting this idea of building up the church of God in these chapters: "Ways of serving" (12:5); "make him useful." (12:7); "...help them grow," (14:3); "...encourage yourself." (14:4); "help the church grow." (15:5); "...I help you" (14:6); "...talk with a clear meaning," (14:9); "...build up the church." (14:12); "...help" (14:17); "...help one another grow." (14:27).

It is in the midst of this discussion of the reception and use of gifts of the Spirit that St. Paul introduces his well-known psalm of love with the words: "And now I'll show you the best way of all" (12:31).

Chapter 13 falls into three divisions: Vv. 1-3, Without love--nothing; Vv. 4-7, "Love is..."; Vv. 8-13, Love never ends.

1 CORINTHIANS, CHAPTER 13

⁹ Calvin W. Niewenhuis, "A Peek at Pentecostalism," *The Christian Reformed Outlook*, quoted in the May 24, 1971, *The Christian News*

¹⁰ Ibid.

A key word in this chapter is ἀγάπη (agapee) translated "charity" in the King James translation and as love in *To-Day's English Version; The New Testament in the Language of Today* (Beck); *Revised Standard Version; Letters to Young Churches* (J.B.Phillips); *Amplified; The Living New Testament*. According to *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible* agapee is translated as "charity" 27 times and as "love" 82 times in the KJV. It appears that in 1611 the terms charity and love were synonymous. This is not the case today. A spot check in Beck reveals that he uses the word "love" wherever the KJV translated agapee as "charity."

The New Testament employs two words for the English, to love. They are ἀγαπάω (agapao) and φιλέω (phileo). In the Greek φίλος (philos) is a friend, a congenial associate (Matt. 11:19). To φιλέω means to manifest some act or token of kindness or affection, to kiss (Matt.26:48). A φίλη (philee) is a female friend (Lk. 15:9). ἀγαπάω (agapao) denotes love on a different, higher level, meaning to love, value, esteem, feel or manifest generous concern for; be faithful towards; to delight in; to set store upon, (Rev. 12:11). The noun ἀγάπην (agapeen), recorded eight times in our chapter, means, love, generosity, kindly concern, devotedness.

In the New Testament it is used in spiritual relationships as they pertain between God and man, man and God, and between Christians. John Peter Lange, in his commentary, notes: "The substantive agapee from the verb agapao is as Trench remarks, 'a purely Christian word, no example of its use occurring in any heathen writer,' and it was employed by the inspired writers, to denote love in its highest and purest sense--a love which embraced as its proper objects both God and man."¹¹ Referring to this chapter Tertullian says that Paul's "...description of love is uttered ...with all the strength of the Spirit."¹²

WITHOUT LOVE -- NOTHING

"If with the tongues of men I speak and of angels, but love have not, I have become brass sounding or a cymbal clanging. 2. And if I have prophecy, and know mysteries all and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as mountains to remove, but love have not, nothing I am. 3. And if I give away in food all my goods, and if I deliver up my body that I may be burned, but love have not, nothing I am profited" (literal).¹³

The Corinthians showed an exaggerated estimate of the value of tongues, so Paul begins with this. The word γλώσσαίς (glosais) is the dative plural of γλώσσα (glosa) the tongue. Paul's opening statement, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels" has caused some to think that Paul is here referring to known languages ("of men") and unknown languages ("of angels"). This, however, is not necessarily the case, and for three reasons. One, Paul was merely describing a hypothetical case. He says: "If..." This does not mean that he had spoken in angelic languages even though in the next chapter he admits that he did speak in tongues. Two, the fact that the word "tongues" is used only once with "men" and "angels" simply shows that human and angelic languages can be grouped together. Thus, they have something in common--they are both languages which can be known and understood by the hearers. Three, whenever men and angels had occasion to converse together in Biblical times, they were able to do so intelligently in known languages without difficulty or the need of interpretation. Our conclusion therefore, is that far from dividing languages into known and unknown categories, the apostle is reaffirming that the gift of glossolalia was in the form of definite languages, not ecstatic utterances. This conclusion is borne out in his paper, *THE CHARISMA OF GLOSSOLALIA*, by Melvin C. Smith. He notes that the term ἡ γλωσσα (ee glosa)

¹¹ John Peter Lange, Commentary on the Holy Scriptures (Zondervan Publishing House) Vol.10, p.266

¹² Ibid., p.267

¹³ George Ricker Berry, *Interlinear Greek-English* (Follett Publishing Company,1960).

"occurs fifty times in the New Testament, In twenty-five of these fifty times, the word is used to describe the actual phenomenon of glossolalia. And it is significant that all but one of these twenty-five times are recorded in the book of Acts and in First Corinthians. It is also significant that, though the term *γλωσσα* (*glosa*) appears in nine different grammatical constructions, the basic vocabulary is the same. No qualifying words are used to distinguish these references, or to show that there is any difference in character between the phenomenon found in both New Testament books. The Biblical proof is overwhelming, compelling the conclusion that the gift of glossolalia in Acts and in First Corinthians consisted of speaking in known languages and of praising God by men who were under the control of the Holy Spirit of God."¹⁴

That "the languages of men" are to be considered real, developed languages becomes clear from chapter 14 of Corinthians. This chapter shows us that the purpose of the special gifts of the Holy Spirit (including the gift of tongues) is to build up the Church. "Pursue love, be eager to have the gifts of the Spirit, and especially to speak God's Word." The main thought of chapter 13 is repeated, declaring that love is required for a proper use of all the Spirit's gifts. This love will direct a person to see that the supreme gift is "to speak God's Word."

The use of the word unknown in the KJV. before tongue in six verses of chapter 14 (2,4,13,14,19, and 27) should not mislead us into thinking that Paul is referring to ecstatic expression in 13:1. As Melvin Smith correctly points out, "This adjective is not a part of the original text, but was added by the translators because their understanding was that the Corinthian tongues phenomenon consisted of speaking in an unknown, ecstatic utterance."¹⁵

In his plea for "talk with a clear meaning" (V. 9) Paul states, "There are, I suppose, ever so many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning" (V. 10). Within this immediate context Paul urges, "If then you talk a strange language, pray to be able to explain it" (V. 13). Since these "strange languages" were capable of interpretation and explanation to other humans would seem to indicate that their original source was human.

Getting back to Chapter 13:1, Paul wishes the Corinthians to know that were they to master the art of communication on all levels (human and angelic), it would not edify, were it lacking in love. Special linguistic gifts had been given to some of the Corinthian fellowship. These are described in I Corinthians, chapter 12, "The Spirit gives... the ability to speak intelligently ...Another can speak God's Word...Another can talk strange languages. Another can tell the meaning of languages" (Vv. 8-10). Not all the members had received the same gifts of the Spirit. Unfortunately, this became a source of friction between the members. Those with greater gifts thought they were better than the believers who had received lesser gifts. A loveless scrambling for top honors was developing in the congregation.

The Apostle points out that a Christian must always speak with charity, or love. Lacking love, a person could speak ever so many languages, be a communications expert, indeed even be able to converse with angels, but it would do the Church no good. Oh, it might sound impressive, like a loud gong or a clashing cymbal. (Greek: brass sounding; a cymbal clanging) It would be just about that useful!

Speech is a gift given us by God. Adam first received it in Eden where God taught him how to talk.¹⁶ It is meant to glorify God and edify our fellow man. What a wonderful gift!

But then came sin, twisting the tongue so that often it speaks without love. Language used without concern for others hurts people and displeases the Saviour. Communication divorced from love turns people off. Our words must be bound together with the mortar of Christian love. Only then do we build God-pleasing relationships in the home, the congregation, the District, the Synod.

V.2 "And if I have prophecy..." *προφήτης* (*prophetees*) is a spokesman or interpreter for deity, a

¹⁴ Melvin C. Smith, *The Charisma of Glossolalia* (Paper delivered to Metropolitan North Pastoral Conference, May 27, 1978) p. 32

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, P. 38

¹⁶ Arthur C. Custance, *Who Taught Adam to Speak?*, Paper #1 Published by the author.

divinely-commissioned and inspired person; a person gifted for the exposition of divine truth; a foreteller of the future, a prophet. "Prophecy" in this instance is not limited to a foretelling of future events. It is here used in the broad sense as we find it in Acts 2:18 where God's servants speak God's Word. It is to speak God's Word which certainly can include predictive prophecy.

V.2,cont. "And know all mysteries and all knowledge..." Does this refer back to "prophecy" or is this a specialized knowledge quite apart from the "prophecy" mentioned first by Paul? The construction and context implies the former, a "direct insight into the secret counsels of God as brought out in the great plan of redemption."¹⁷ Every kind of religious knowledge seems the right understanding taking into account the thrust of Paul's argument.

V.2,cont. "...and if I have all faith so as mountains to remove ..." The moving of mountains is meant in the literal sense, for the Greek μίθιστημι (methisteemi) means, to cause a change of position, to remove, transport. cf. Matt. 27:20; 21:21.

The Apostle informs the Corinthians that such an intellectual "superChristian" would amount to nothing at all if he did not practice God's kind of love. He wouldn't be helping anyone, including himself.

Is there a lesson here for us who belong to a confessional Lutheran Church? We stress knowing what is right. "If ye continue in my word ...ye shall know the truth" (John 8:31,32). We want our children to know what they believe. This leads us to deplore the so-called "Confirmation complex" whereby the learning process ends with Confirmation. We stress continued study of God's Word amongst our adult members. Pastors and teachers are offered regular opportunities for further learning, theoretical and practical, in conferences, seminars, etc.

But of what use is this knowledge if it does not result in love? Knowing the answers is of little value if love does not move the newly confirmed to faithfully use the Means of Grace. With superior knowledge of the Bible one might be able to win an argument about religion. However, the defeated party in the debate won't be moved by our learning if we were loveless. Probably, he will just remember how cold and callous we were.

Remember, friends, Jesus, our Saviour, knew, "...every kind of hidden truth and...every kind of knowledge" (Col. 2:3,4-, Beck Tr.). Yet he never used His knowledge merely to impress. He used it to edify and build up the Kingdom. He didn't come to earth just to show how much He knew about the subject of sin; He came to save people from their sins. The Son came, "...that the world through him might be saved"(John 3:17b). Jesus shows us how to use knowledge as He reveals the Father's mind so that the world might know of the Father's love. Jesus knew the world was bound for hell. Love moved Him to do something about it. He died for the Christian world's sins of knowing and not loving.

When we, as laymen, teachers, pastors, become impressed with our theological knowledge, let's be quick to ask ourselves, "Is this knowledge being used to help people? Always, when we discuss spiritual truth, let's remember to couple knowledge with love.

V.3 "And if I give away in food all my goods, and if I deliver up my body that I may be burned, but love have not, nothing I am profited" (literal). Ψωμίσω (psomiso), "give away," means to feed by morsels; to feed; supply with food. The rendering ἵνα καθήσωμαι (hina kauthesoomai), to be consumed with fire, is strongly supported by manuscript evidence according to Lange. He notes that some old MSS. (manuscripts) read καυχῆσωμαι (kaukeesomai), meaning to glory or boast. This reading he claims is an early "gloss."¹⁸ Wm. F. Beck appears to be the only newer translation rendering the selection, "give up my body but only to boast." Could it be that the rendering written off by Lange as an ancient "gloss" is in fact the correct one? Perhaps it should be noted that the Beck translation does not preclude martyrdom by fire. Furthermore, the "only to boast" concept is implied in the thrust of Paul's argument--Preferring Lange for the moment we note his comments on being consumed with fire:

¹⁷ Lange, op.cit., p.268

¹⁸ Ibid., p4268

"The burning here may be either a burning to death, or simply torture by fire. Perhaps Paul had in mind such events as are recorded in Dan. 3:19ff. The history of his time had not furnished any instances of martyrdom at the stake; ...through the outlook which he cast into the future, he might here have anticipated something of the sort in the Spirit... The parallelism with the first clause naturally suggests the idea of a self-sacrifice for the good of others. But this does not exclude the idea of a martyr-death, inasmuch as such a death may serve to manifest both an unwavering confidence in God, and also a readiness to devote one's self, body and life, for the benefit of others. But if such self-devotion did not spring from love, it is obvious that the martyrdom thus suffered would be only of a kind that often occurred later in the history of the church--(a mere parade of heroic endurance or defiance)."¹⁹

Here in V.3 Paul is building up to a climax in this first section demonstrating to the Corinthians that without love, there is nothing. Continuing his hypothetical case he brings superlative examples of self-sacrifice: giving away first of all your livelihood in the form of all your food, and then, giving your very life, and that in a most painful fashion--death by fire. Lest the Corinthians think that such great acts of self-sacrifice would merit them God's special favours, Paul ends off this thought by saying, "I am profited nothing." Paul wants the Church to know that without love, self-sacrifice achieves nothing.

In today's situation this means that we might liquidate all of our assets and give them to the Church Extension Fund; face a firing squad rather than give up one letter of Sacred Scripture; receive recognition from both church and world as philanthropist and martyr; have your deeds echo down the corridors of history as the greatest acts of self-sacrifice known amongst mortals; but if love were not the motive behind it all, it would be nothing.

Perhaps this becomes clearer when we realize that God sees what men often fail to recognize: the inner impulse behind the deed. Self-glorification and self-righteousness masquerading as self-sacrifice do not deceive the all-seeing God. Men may be impressed. God isn't.

When in the present-day atmosphere of pseudo-ecumenism we take our stand (as we must), the rationale behind our position must always be agape, the love from Christ and for Christ. When and if called upon to suffer (even physically) for our insistence upon true ecumenism may we not be motivated by a penchant for heroics or a sterile defiance.

Needy and suffering humanity looks to us for help. Should we not be unstinting in the service we are willing to offer others?

But Christians don't give of their bread to earn the approval of God. For Jesus' sake they already have that! Gospel "food" is available in sufficient quantities. Souls need never hunger. Since Jesus gave his body up to the torture of the cross our bodies need never be placed into the "lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15b).

May Christ's love move our Michigan District, together with all of its congregations to bestow the greatest good (the Gospel) upon a world suffering mainly from spiritual malnutrition.

LOVE IS ...

The first part of this paragraph emphasizes the thought that Christian love is not self-centered. A literal translation would read:

V.4 "Love has patience, is kind; love is not envious; love is not vainglorious, is not puffed up,
V.5 acts not unseemly, seeks not the things of its own, is not quickly provoked."

Says Lange, "In this paragraph we have a eulogy of love in a description of its qualities, setting forth its

¹⁹ Ibid., p.269

superior excellence both positively and negatively."²⁰ The patience exemplified by Christian love has an enduring, indulgent quality about it that is perhaps best described as long-suffering. It denotes the withholding of anger at the failings of others.--The Greek word for "kind", χρηστεύεται (chreesteuetai) occurs only once in the New Testament. It means disposed to be useful. --Next, we are told of some bad features which are foreign to Christian love, "Love is not envious," that is, it does not exhibit wrong or unpleasant feelings in the face of advantages enjoyed by others, giving rise to strife and schism. It is the same usage as found in Romans 13:13, where Paul scores sins of the flesh. --"Love is not vainglorious." According to one authority the meaning here is, to show off, make a display with false pretences, to talk big, to swagger. --Love "is not puffed up." Such a person is inflated with vanity. It is upon such conceit and self-exaltation that the false pretense and big talk is based.---The warning against "unseemly" activity ἀσχημονεῖ (ascheemonei), appears to be directed against obtrusiveness in the use of gifts. Meyer and Hodge give the general interpretation, "love does nothing of which one ought to be ashamed; its whole deportment is decorous and becoming."²¹ --In the expression, "seeks not the things of its own," we have the exact opposite of the real nature of love, which is looking out for the other person, rather than seeking only one's own advantage. This same thought finds expression in 10:24, where Paul states, "Nobody should look for his own good, but everybody for the good of the other person" (Beck tr.). Also 10:33: "So I try to please everybody in every way and don't look for my advantage but for that of many people so that they may be saved" (Beck tr.). --Love "is not quickly provoked." Here Bloomfield notes, "... the expression is a strong one, and denotes all those feelings of violent irritation and bitter exacerbation, which are so easily excited in an irritable man."²²

We have been called to the daily task of destroying selfish "love" and building Christian love. That involves a constant struggle against impatience, possessiveness, phyness. Sinful man, in his fear of losing what he mistakenly calls his own (after all, it comes from God), begins to hoard it all for himself. He refuses to share. As Christians must we not admit that much of life is spent in posturing, trying to be something or somebody that we are not. The attempt only results in more phyness and dishonesty.

How different the life-style of the Saviour! His life was centered in others and not in self. How patient He is with His disciples who very often were to be found in the "slow learners" class. How kind He is with the father who said, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). Before Pontius Pilate the Son of God does not act conceited. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, He opened not His mouth" (Is. 53:7).

This section continues, "(Love) V.5b reckons not evil, V.6 rejoices not at unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; V.7 all things covers, all things believes, all things hopes, all things endures" (literal).

"reckons not evil," The Greek for "reckons" is also used in Romans 4:8 and 2 Cor. 5:9 where we read, "Happy are you if the Lord doesn't count sins against you;" "In Christ, God was getting rid of the enmity between Himself and the people of the world by not counting their sins against them,"(Beck tr.). One commentator puts it this way: "love does not charge the evil inflicted," "does not carry it ever in mind, but forgives it."²³ The phrase is italicized in Beck's translation indicating that Paul here has an old Testament passage in mind. The Scripture involved is Zechariah 7:10 and 8:17 which reads in both places, "let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor" The Wm. F. Beck translation, "It doesn't plan to hurt anyone." doesn't appear to accord with the original. We prefer the translation found in the Today's English Version, "love does not keep a record of wrongs." --Love "rejoices not at unrighteousness." What is the iniquity ἀδικία (adikia), injustice, wrong, iniquity, falsehood, deceitfulness referred to here? Some believe it is iniquity in general as it spreads and triumphs in the world. Other interpreters see it as iniquity perpetrated by particular individuals. The following explanation appears to be right:

²⁰ Ibid., p.269

²¹ Ibid., p. 269

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., p.269

"The trait here brought out, is that disposition to rejoice in the downfall or injury of others, which springs out of ill-will or jealousy, and which is gladdened when those who are envied for their advantages are compelled through some mis-step to come down from their high position and incur disgrace."²⁴

Christian love "rejoices with the truth." The truth spoken of here by Paul ἀληθεία (aleetheia), is variously interpreted as objective or subjective truth. We cannot quarrel with those interpreters who see here an emphasis by Paul on truth in the ethical and moral sense. To grant this certainly does not exclude truth in all of its many and varied aspects, Scriptural truth included.

The practical importance of this phrase was underlined for me as I was in the midst of this study. One morning the chairman of the Ottawa Lutheran Council visited my office and made his plea for the entry of our congregation into the Council. In the course of the conversation (which lasted about an hour) he inferred that if I and my congregation had more of the kind of love spoken of in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, we would be more than ready to join the Council. Not to join, in his estimate, constituted a lack of Christian love. I invited the Council representative to take a closer look at the chapter, especially the phrase now under consideration. He was invited to consider the thought that genuine Christian love demanded the exact opposite of what he was suggesting. Christian love demanded that we not join this unionistic and liberal council with its propensity to perpetuate the status-quo (unionism and liberalism) in our Ottawa area.

Love finds no joy in evil. It is repelled by injustice, wrong, iniquity, falsehood, and deceitfulness. Christian love does not rejoice in the daily parade of depravity and law-breaking reported by the TV. It does not gloat over the neighbor's sins. It is not happy to note instances of false doctrine and practice as taught and tolerated in sections of the visible church.

The old Adam gets satisfaction from keeping an account of the evil found in others. It gets a "kick" out of recounting instances of iniquity. It carries on this kind of activity for its own sake for it makes people look good in their own eyes. Such are the self-righteous. They are the image builders who refuse to let God rebuild them in the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

But the soul forgiven its evil by the Heavenly Father for the sake of what Jesus did on the cross finds no joy in evil. Increasingly, truth, and the pursuit of truth becomes the goal and joy of life. The new man in Christ seeks satisfaction in the sterling values. When truth prevails, it wears a smile. Particularly is this true in matters pertaining to The Faith. It is joyful whenever and wherever the pure Word of God is being taught.

Christian love rejoices when the Word of God holds sway from the pulpit, in the class-room, at the Pastor-Teacher Conference, through the church periodicals, and so forth. It is happy to offer its children Sunday school materials which are sound in doctrine. It is pleased to note that God is maintaining a remarkable degree of agreement in doctrine and practice within our Synod. It finds joy in working for the promotion of the true teachings of the Bible as they are reflected in authentic Lutheranism.

Christian love, finding its source and sustaining power in Jesus Christ, "Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. This most beautiful refrain finds expression in the *Amplified New Testament*, "Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, its ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances and it endures everything (without weakening)."

My dear friends, when the love of Christ comes to live in our soul we won't let evil conquer us, but we will conquer evil with good. (Compare Romans 12:21.)

LOVE NEVER ENDS

V.8 "Love never fails; but whether prophecies, they shall be done away; whether tongues, they

²⁴ Ibid., p.270

shall cease; whether knowledge it shall be done away. V.9 For in part we know, and in part we prophesy; V.10 but when may come that which is perfect, then that in part shall be done away. V.11 When I was an infant, as an infant I spoke, as an infant I thought, as an infant I reasoned; but when I became a man, I did away with the things of the infant. For we see now through a glass obscurely, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know according as also I have been known" (literal).

"Love never fails." The Greek for "fails," ἐκπίπτει (ekpiptei) denotes the fading of flowers, the falling of trees and limbs, etc. The same verb is used in Romans 9:6, "not however ... has failed the word of God." Also in Mark 13:25, "And the stars of heaven shall fall," Since the love spoken of here by Paul does not ekpiptei, that is, does not cease, does not come to an end, we can only conclude that it is eternal. That this is the correct interpretation we learn from V.13 where we are told that love μένει (menei) abides or continues.

Much has been said and written about human love. Perhaps no word in our vocabulary receives as much attention. It is a topic about which almost everyone has some opinion. However, most of the ideas expressed are about as long-lasting as yesterday's hit recording. It must come as a relief to know that there is such a commodity as genuine, lasting love. It is a love that always succeeds. It never fails. It cannot die. It is eternal. It is God's kind of love, for God "is love," This love existed in the heart of the Father even before the creation of matter. This love continues in the perfect world to come.

The next section poses some questions: When will prophecies be "done away"? When will tongues "cease"? When will knowledge be "done away"? Will these spiritual phenomena cease sometime between the time when Paul penned his letter and the end of time; or, will they end with the second coming of Christ?

William G. Bellshaw presents a telling argument for the stopping of γλῶσσαι (gloosai), tongues, with the completion of the New Testament Canon. His argument runs as follows:

"Since the New Testament was not complete, this gift was needed to validate the message which was being preached. After the canon of the Bible was completed, this gift was no longer necessary. Such is the explicit testimony of 1 Corinthians 13. The words of verse nine assert that tongues will cease. When will this be? The succeeding verses answer the question. It is important to note that Paul places the emphasis in the next verse on the twofold use of the word 'part.' Literally he said: 'For in part we are knowing, and in part we are prophesying.' The incomplete nature of the revealed Word of God is thus emphasized. But there is a time when it will be completed. Paul refers to the finished product as 'that which is perfect' (verse 10). Though some may refer the word 'perfect' to Christ, this interpretation cannot be sustained. This adjective (used as a noun) is in the neuter gender. Therefore, it is a reference to the finished (perfect) or completed Word of God. If it referred to Christ, it would be in the masculine gender.

"With the completion of the New Testament there no longer was a need for men to be used as instrumentalities to give forth God's authoritative message. This is now contained in the written Word. Men now simply proclaim it. The gift of tongues authenticating these messages also was no longer necessary. All of the things relating to this partial testimony will be made idle or rendered inoperative (the literal meaning of 'shall be done away'). The gift of tongues and related gifts were for the first years of the church's history (verse 11), while God was still in the process of revealing His Word to mankind (verse 12)."²⁵

We admit that there is much in this argument that we find attractive (e.g. support for the Doctrine of Scripture and an argument against the modern "glossolalia"), but we doubt that Bellshaw's approach is in agreement with the text. He operates with the premise that all those statements referring to completion and

²⁵ William G. Bellshaw, "The Confusion of Tongues," Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol.120 (April-June,1963, pp.151-152 (Quoted from Conference Essay by Melvin C.Smith)

perfection are to be applied to the completed canon of Scripture. In so doing Bellshaw appears to overlook V.12. He would have the verse read as follows: "For we see now (while the canon is incomplete) through a glass obscurely, but then (when the canon is complete) face to face; now (incomplete canon) I know in part, but then (completed canon) I shall know according as also I have been known."

But the "face to face" and the "I shall know according as also I have been known." cannot refer to the time after the canon was completed. They denote the condition which will prevail after the parousia, the second coming of Christ-Although the New Testament books were not all recorded when Paul penned 1 Corinthians, yet the Apostle had a thorough grasp of the spiritual truths contained in the completed canon. Yet, he admits that his spiritual vision was less than perfect, for he compares it to the reflection cast in the imperfect ancient mirrors which were made of polished metal. But "then" (in heaven) spiritual vision will be "face to face." "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). At the present time the knowledge of Paul is imperfect but then he shall ἐπιγνώσομαι (epignosomai), thoroughly know. He shall know even as he was known by God in his conversion. P.E. Kretzmann states, "...in heaven every believer will see, know, understand the fullness of the divine essence, attributes, plans, counsels in a perfect and blessed understanding, so thoroughly as he himself was known of God when the Lord changed his heart in conversion."²⁶ In this context Luther comments: "I shall know Him then in the clearest possible manner, without covering; for the covering was not taken from Him, but from me, for He has none before Him."²⁷

The "in part we are knowing, and in part we are prophesying" is not referring to the "...incomplete nature of the revealed Word of God..." (see above); rather it refers to the incomplete knowledge of the Corinthian Christians before they would see God "face to face." V. 10 tells us that that incomplete knowledge shall be replaced by complete knowledge. Paul is not here saying that an incomplete Scripture shall be replaced or augmented by a completed Scripture. (Let it be noted here that the completeness of the Scriptures lies not in the fact that they reveal all that could be revealed, but in the fact that what they do reveal is sufficient, inerrant, and infallible.) V.11 illustrates that there is no further need for the imperfect when the perfect comes. A man has no further need for childish ways. There is no further need for the light of moon and stars when the sun comes up. You blow out the candles when the power comes back on after the electrical storm. In heaven many gaps of our imperfect knowledge will be filled in. Now, in a sense, we are infants; then, we shall have reached our majority.

In Vv. 8-12 Paul highlights the enduring quality of Christian love when he refers to the transitory nature of some spiritual gifts that had been bestowed upon the Christians in Corinth. Great as they were, they must always be kept in proper perspective. Prophecy, in the sense of predicting forthcoming events would be fulfilled, and thus serve no further purpose. The gift of speaking in unknown languages would cease. (When remains an open question.) Knowledge which is only partial would be superseded by a full grasp of the truth. On the other hand, love never dies.

When Laymen, Teachers, and Pastors radiate this kind of love in their interpersonal relationships, things are bound to happen in our Michigan District. The unsaved surrounding our various churches will begin to see Christian love as the love that never fails. By God's grace they may come to a saving faith in the source of all love--the Triune God.

St. Paul concludes his psalm of love (V.13), "And now abides faith, hope, love; these three things; but the greater of these is love" (literal).

Faith is confidence. It is the assurance that for the sake of Jesus our sins are cleansed away. It is the trust that God is our dear Heavenly Father. In the ungodly atmosphere of Corinth this confidence was of course threatened. However, in heaven, the trust between the Corinthians and their Creator would be firmly established forever. This side of eternity their faith in God's love was often weak. Once they (and we) shed the sinful nature, confidence in God will never waver.

In heaven, the saints of all ages shall have the joyful and confident expectation of receiving only good from God. We will always be able to hope for the best. Since heaven is eternal, it will not be enjoyed all at

²⁶ Kretzmann, op.cit., Vol.#2, p.153

²⁷ Ibid., p.153

once. Happy expectations will be a part of the heavenly bliss. Now, hopes are often thwarted. Then, hope will never be frustrated.

Wonderful and great as this faith and hope is, love is greater! Without the love of God there could be no faith. There would be no hope. Christians have faith and hope for the future because God loves them in Christ Jesus. This gives us confidence and hope for the future. This love emanating from the Triune God lasts forever. Holy Scripture says so!

It is this love which builds the Church of God. And so Paul admonishes the Corinthians and the Michigan District, "Pursue love" (14:1).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Analytical Greek Lexicon, New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers.

Berry, George Ricker. *The Interlinear Literal Translation of The Greek New Testament*. Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1960.

Kretzmann, Paul E. *Popular Commentary of the Bible New Testament Vol. II*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Lange, John Peter. *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures Volume 10*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.

Niewenhuis, Calvin W. *A Peek At Pentecostalism*. *Christian News*, Vol. 4, No. 18 Monday, May 24, 1971.

Smith, Melvin C. *The Charisma of Glossolalia*. Conference Essay, Metropolitan North Pastoral Conference, Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Hartland, Wisconsin, May 27, 1968: Mimeographed, Seminary Book Store.

Tappert, Theodore G. *The Book of Concord*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Young. *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*.

ἀγάπη (agapee) translated "charity" in the King James translation and as love in *To-Day's English Version; The New Testament in the Language of Today* (Beck); *Revised Standard Version; Letters to Young Churches* (J.B. Phillips); *Amplified; The Living New Testament*. According to *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible* agapee is translated as "charity" 27 times and as "love" 82 times in the KJV. It appears that in 1611 the terms charity and love were synonymous. This is not the case today. A spot check in Beck reveals that he uses the word "love" wherever the KJV translated agapee as "charity."

The New Testament employs two words for the English, to love. They are ἀγαπάω (agapao) and φιλέω (phileo). In the Greek φίλος (philos) is a friend, a congenial associate (Matt. 11:19). Το φιλέω means to manifest some act or token of kindness or affection, to kiss (Matt. 26:48). A φίλη (philee) is a female friend (Lk. 15:9). ἀγαπάω (agapao) denotes love on a different, higher level, meaning to love, value, esteem, feel or manifest generous concern for; be faithful towards; to delight in; to set store upon, (Rev. 12:11). The noun ἀγάπην (agapeen), recorded eight times in our chapter, means, love, generosity, kindly concern, devotedness.

In the New Testament it is used in spiritual relationships as they pertain between God and man, man and God, and between Christians. John Peter Lange, in his commentary, notes: "The substantive agapee from the verb agapao is as Trench remarks, 'a purely Christian word, no example of its use occurring in any heathen writer,' and it was employed by the inspired writers, to denote love in its highest and purest sense--a love which embraced as its proper objects both God and man."²⁸ Referring to this chapter Tertullian says that Paul's "...description of love is uttered ...with all the strength of the Spirit."²⁹

WITHOUT LOVE -- NOTHING

"If with the tongues of men I speak and of angels, but love have not, I have become brass sounding or a cymbal clanging. 2. And if I have prophecy, and know mysteries all and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as mountains to remove, but love have not, nothing I am. 3. And if I give away in food all my goods, and if I deliver up my body that I may be burned, but love have not, nothing I am profited" (literal).³⁰

The Corinthians showed an exaggerated estimate of the value of tongues, so Paul begins with this. The word γλώσσαίς (glosais) is the dative plural of γλῶσσα (glosa) the tongue. Paul's opening statement, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels" has caused some to think that Paul is here referring to known languages ("of men") and unknown languages ("of angels"). This, however, is not necessarily the case, and for three reasons. One, Paul was merely describing a hypothetical case. He says: "If..." This does not mean that he had spoken in angelic languages even though in the next chapter he admits that he did speak in tongues. Two, the fact that the word "tongues" is used only once with "men" and "angels" simply shows that human and angelic languages can be grouped together. Thus, they have something in common--they are both languages which can be known and understood by the hearers. Three, whenever men and angels had occasion to converse together in Biblical times, they were able to do so intelligently in known languages without difficulty or the need of interpretation. Our conclusion therefore, is that far from dividing languages into known and unknown categories, the apostle is reaffirming that the gift of glossolalia was in the form of definite languages, not ecstatic utterances. This conclusion is borne out in his paper, *THE CHARISMA OF GLOSSOLALIA*, by Melvin C. Smith. He notes that the term ἡ γλῶσσα (ee glosa)

"occurs fifty times in the New Testament, In twenty-five of these fifty times, the word is used to describe the actual phenomenon of glossolalia. And it is significant that all but one of these

²⁸ John Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Zondervan Publishing House) Vol.10, p.266

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.267

³⁰ George Ricker Berry, *Interlinear Greek-English* (Follett Publishing Company, 1960).

twenty-five times are recorded in the book of Acts and in First Corinthians. It is also significant that, though the term γλωσσα (glosa) appears in nine different grammatical constructions, the basic vocabulary is the same. No qualifying words are used to distinguish these references, or to show that there is any difference in character between the phenomenon found in both New Testament books. The Biblical proof is overwhelming, compelling the conclusion that the gift of glossalaia in Acts and in First Corinthians consisted of speaking in known languages and of praising God by men who were under the control of the Holy Spirit of God."³¹

That "the languages of men" are to be considered real, developed languages becomes clear from chapter 14 of Corinthians. This chapter shows us that the purpose of the special gifts of the Holy Spirit (including the gift of tongues) is to build up the Church. "Pursue love, be eager to have the gifts of the Spirit, and especially to speak God's Word." The main thought of chapter 13 is repeated, declaring that love is required for a proper use of all the Spirit's gifts. This love will direct a person to see that the supreme gift is "to speak God's Word."

The use of the word unknown in the KJV. before tongue in six verses of chapter 14 (2,4,13,14,19, and 27) should not mislead us into thinking that Paul is referring to ecstatic expression in 13:1. As Melvin Smith correctly points out, "This adjective is not a part of the original text, but was added by the translators because their understanding was that the Corinthian tongues phenomenon consisted of speaking in an unknown, ecstatic utterance."³²

In his plea for "talk with a clear meaning" (V. 9) Paul states, "There are, I suppose, ever so many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning" (V. 10). Within this immediate context Paul urges, "If then you talk a strange language, pray to be able to explain it" (V. 13). Since these "strange languages" were capable of interpretation and explanation to other humans would seem to indicate that their original source was human.

Getting back to Chapter 13:1, Paul wishes the Corinthians to know that were they to master the art of communication on all levels (human and angelic), it would not edify, were it lacking in love. Special linguistic gifts had been given to some of the Corinthian fellowship. These are described in I Corinthians, chapter 12, "The Spirit gives... the ability to speak intelligently ...Another can speak God's Word...Another can talk strange languages. Another can tell the meaning of languages" (Vv. 8-10). Not all the members had received the same gifts of the Spirit. Unfortunately, this became a source of friction between the members. Those with greater gifts thought they were better than the believers who had received lesser gifts. A loveless scrambling for top honors was developing in the congregation.

The Apostle points out that a Christian must always speak with charity, or love. Lacking love, a person could speak ever so many languages, be a communications expert, indeed even be able to converse with angels, but it would do the Church no good. Oh, it might sound impressive, like a loud gong or a clashing symbol. (Greek: brass sounding; a cymbol clanging) It would be just about that useful!

Speech is a gift given us by God. Adam first received it in Eden where God taught him how to talk.³³ It is meant to glorify God and edify our fellow man. What a wonderful gift!

But then came sin, twisting the tongue so that often it speaks without love. Language used without concern for others hurts people and displeases the Saviour. Communication divorced from love turns people off. Our words must be bound together with the mortar of Christian love. Only then do we build God-pleasing relationships in the home, the congregation, the District, the Synod.

V.2 "And if I have prophecy..." προφήτης (prophetees) is a spokesman or interpreter for deity, a divinely-commissioned and inspired person; a person gifted for the exposition of divine truth; a foreteller of the future, a prophet. "Prophecy" in this instance is not limited to a fortelling of future events. It is here used in the

³¹ Melvin C. Smith, *The Charisma of Glossolalia* (Paper delivered to Metropolitan North Pastoral Conference, May 27, 1978) p. 32

³² *Ibid.*, P. 38

³³ Arthur C. Custance, *Who Taught Adam to Speak?*, Paper #1 Published by the author.

broad sense as we find it in Acts 2:18 where God's servants speak God's Word. It is to speak God's Word which certainly can include predictive prophecy.

V.2,cont. "And know all mysteries and all knowledge..." Does this refer back to "prophecy" or is this a specialized knowledge quite apart from the "prophecy" mentioned first by Paul? The construction and context implies the former, a "direct insight into the secret counsels of God as brought out in the great plan of redemption."³⁴ Every kind of religious knowledge seems the right understanding taking into account the thrust of Paul's argument.

V.2,cont. "...and if I have all faith so as mountains to remove ..." The moving of mountains is meant in the literal sense, for the Greek μηθίστημι (methisteemi) means, to cause a change of position, to remove, transport. cf. Matt. 27:20; 21:21.

The Apostle informs the Corinthians that such an intellectual "superChristian" would amount to nothing at all if he did not practice God's kind of love. He wouldn't be helping anyone, including himself.

Is there a lesson here for us who belong to a confessional Lutheran Church? We stress knowing what is right. "If ye continue in my word ...ye shall know the truth" (John 8:31,32). We want our children to know what they believe. This leads us to deplore the so-called "Confirmation complex" whereby the learning process ends with Confirmation. We stress continued study of God's Word amongst our adult members. Pastors and teachers are offered regular opportunities for further learning, theoretical and practical, in conferences, seminars, etc.

But of what use is this knowledge if it does not result in love? Knowing the answers is of little value if love does not move the newly confirmed to faithfully use the Means of Grace. With superior knowledge of the Bible one might be able to win an argument about religion. However, the defeated party in the debate won't be moved by our learning if we were loveless. Probably, he will just remember how cold and callous we were.

Remember, friends, Jesus, our Saviour, knew, "...every kind of hidden truth and...every kind of knowledge" (Col. 2:3,4-, Beck Tr.). Yet he never used His knowledge merely to impress. He used it to edify and build up the Kingdom. He didn't come to earth just to show how much He knew about the subject of sin; He came to save people from their sins. The Son came, "...that the world through him might be saved"(John 3:17b). Jesus shows us how to use knowledge as He reveals the Father's mind so that the world might know of the Father's love. Jesus knew the world was bound for hell. Love moved Him to do something about it. He died for the Christian world's sins of knowing and not loving.

When we, as laymen, teachers, pastors, become impressed with our theological knowledge, let's be quick to ask ourselves, "Is this knowledge being used to help people?" Always, when we discuss spiritual truth, let's remember to couple knowledge with love.

V.3 "And if I give away in food all my goods, and if I deliver up my body that I may be burned, but love have not, nothing I am profited" (literal). Ψωμίσω (psomiso), "give away," means to feed by morsels; to feed; supply with food. The rendering ἵνα καυθήσωμαι (hina kautheesoomai), to be consumed with fire, is strongly supported by manuscript evidence according to Lange. He notes that some old MSS. (manuscripts) read καυχῆσωμαι (kaukeesomai), meaning to glory or boast. This reading he claims is an early "gloss."³⁵ Wm. F. Beck appears to be the only newer translation rendering the selection, "give up my body but only to boast." Could it be that the rendering written off by Lange as an ancient "gloss" is in fact the correct one? Perhaps it should be noted that the Beck translation does not preclude martyrdom by fire. Furthermore, the "only to boast" concept is implied in the thrust of Paul's argument--Preferring Lange for the moment we note his comments on being consumed with fire:

"The burning here may be either a burning to death, or simply torture by fire. Perhaps Paul had in mind such events as are recorded in Dan. 3:19ff. The history of his time had not furnished any

³⁴ Lange, op.cit., p.268

³⁵ Ibid., p4268

instances of martyrdom at the stake; ...through the outlook which he cast into the future, he might here have anticipated something of the sort in the Spirit.... The parallelism with the first clause naturally suggests the idea of a self-sacrifice for the good of others. But this does not exclude the idea of a martyr-death, inasmuch as such a death may serve to manifest both an unwavering confidence in God, and also a readiness to devote one's self, body and life, for the benefit of others. But if such self-devotion did not spring from love, it is obvious that the martyrdom thus suffered would be only of a kind that often occurred later in the history of the church--(a mere parade of heroic endurance or defiance)."³⁶

Here in V.3 Paul is building up to a climax in this first section demonstrating to the Corinthians that without love, there is nothing. Continuing his hypothetical case he brings superlative examples of self-sacrifice: giving away first of all your livelihood in the form of all your food, and then, giving your very life, and that in a most painful fashion--death by fire. Lest the Corinthians think that such great acts of self-sacrifice would merit them God's special favours, Paul ends off this thought by saying, "I am profited nothing." Paul wants the Church to know that without love, self-sacrifice achieves nothing.

In today's situation this means that we might liquidate all of our assets and give them to the Church Extension Fund; face a firing squad rather than give up one letter of Sacred Scripture; receive recognition from both church and world as philanthropist and martyr; have your deeds echo down the corridors of history as the greatest acts of self-sacrifice known amongst mortals; but if love were not the motive behind it all, it would be nothing.

Perhaps this becomes clearer when we realize that God sees what men often fail to recognize: the inner impulse behind the deed. Self-glorification and self-righteousness masquerading as self-sacrifice do not deceive the all-seeing God. Men may be impressed. God isn't.

When in the present-day atmosphere of pseudo-ecumenism we take our stand (as we must), the rationale behind our position must always be agape, the love from Christ and for Christ. When and if called upon to suffer (even physically) for our insistence upon true ecumenism may we not be motivated by a penchant for heroics or a sterile defiance.

Needy and suffering humanity looks to us for help. Should we not be unstinting in the service we are willing to offer others?

But Christians don't give of their bread to earn the approval of God. For Jesus' sake they already have that! Gospel "food" is available in sufficient quantities. Souls need never hunger. Since Jesus gave his body up to the torture of the cross our bodies need never be placed into the "lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15b).

May Christ's love move our Michigan District, together with all of its congregations to bestow the greatest good (the Gospel) upon a world suffering mainly from spiritual malnutrition.

LOVE IS ...

The first part of this paragraph emphasizes the thought that Christian love is not self-centered. A literal translation would read:

V.4 "Love has patience, is kind; love is not envious; love is not vainglorious, is not puffed up,
V.5 acts not unseemly, seeks not the things of its own, is not quickly provoked."

Says Lange, "In this paragraph we have a eulogy of love in a description of its qualities, setting forth its superior excellence both positively and negatively."³⁷ The patience exemplified by Christian love has an enduring, indulgent quality about it that is perhaps best described as long-suffering. It denotes the withholding

³⁶ Ibid., p.269

³⁷ Ibid., p.269

of anger at the failings of others.--The Greek word for "kind", χρηστεύεται (chreesteuetai) occurs only once in the New Testament. It means disposed to be useful. --Next, we are told of some bad features which are foreign to Christian love, "Love is not envious," that is, it does not exhibit wrong or unpleasant feelings in the face of advantages enjoyed by others, giving rise to strife and schism. It is the same usage as found in Romans 13:13, where Paul scores sins of the flesh. --"Love is not vainglorious." According to one authority the meaning here is, to show off, make a display with false pretences, to talk big, to swagger. --Love "is not puffed up." Such a person is inflated with vanity. It is upon such conceit and self-exaltation that the false pretense and big talk is based.----The warning against "unseemly" activity ἀσχημονεῖ (ascheemonei), appears to be directed against obtrusiveness in the use of gifts. Meyer and Hodge give the general interpretation, "love does nothing of which one ought to be ashamed; its whole deportment is decorous and becoming."³⁸ --In the expression, "seeks not the things of its own," we have the exact opposite of the real nature of love, which is looking out for the other person, rather than seeking only one's own advantage. This same thought finds expression in 10:24, where Paul states, "Nobody should look for his own good, but everybody for the good of the other person" (Beck tr.). Also 10:33: "So I try to please everybody in every way and don't look for my advantage but for that of many people so that they may be saved" (Beck tr.). --Love "is not quickly provoked." Here Bloomfield notes, "... the expression is a strong one, and denotes all those feelings of violent irritation and bitter exacerbation, which are so easily excited in an irritable man."³⁹

We have been called to the daily task of destroying selfish "love" and building Christian love. That involves a constant struggle against impatience, possessiveness, phyness. Sinful man, in his fear of losing what he mistakenly calls his own (after all, it comes from God), begins to hoard it all for himself. He refuses to share. As Christians must we not admit that much of life is spent in posturing, trying to be something or somebody that we are not. The attempt only results in more phyness and dishonesty.

How different the life-style of the Saviour! His life was centered in others and not in self. How patient He is with His disciples who very often were to be found in the "slow learners" class. How kind He is with the father who said, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). Before Pontius Pilate the Son of God does not act conceited. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, He opened not His mouth" (Is. 53:7).

This section continues, "(Love) V.5b reckons not evil, V.6 rejoices not at unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; V.7 all things covers, all things believes, all things hopes, all things endures" (literal).

"reckons not evil," The Greek for "reckons" is also used in Romans 4:8 and 2 Cor. 5:9 where we read, "Happy are you if the Lord doesn't count sins against you;" "In Christ, God was getting rid of the enmity between Himself and the people of the world by not counting their sins against them,"(Beck tr.). One commentator puts it this way: "love does not charge the evil inflicted," "does not carry it ever in mind, but forgives it."⁴⁰ The phrase is italicized in Beck's translation indicating that Paul here has an old Testament passage in mind. The Scripture involved is Zechariah 7:10 and 8:17 which reads in both places, "let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor" The Wm. F. Beck translation, "It doesn't plan to hurt anyone." doesn't appear to accord with the original. We prefer the translation found in the Today's English Version, "love does not keep a record of wrongs." --Love "rejoices not at unrighteousness. " What is the iniquity ἀδικία (adikia), injustice, wrong, iniquity, falsehood, deceitfulness referred to here? Some believe it is iniquity in general as it spreads and triumphs in the world. Other interpreters see it as iniquity perpetrated by particular individuals. The following explanation appears to be right:

"The trait here brought out, is that disposition to rejoice in the downfall or injury of others, which springs out of ill-will or jealousy, and which is gladdened when those who are envied for their

³⁸ Ibid., p. 269

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.269

advantages are compelled through some mis-step to come down from their high position and incur disgrace."⁴¹

Christian love "rejoices with the truth." The truth spoken of here by Paul ἀληθεία (aleetheia), is variously interpreted as objective or subjective truth. We cannot quarrel with those interpreters who see here an emphasis by Paul on truth in the ethical and moral sense. To grant this certainly does not exclude truth in all of its many and varied aspects, Scriptural truth included.

The practical importance of this phrase was underlined for me as I was in the midst of this study. One morning the chairman of the Ottawa Lutheran Council visited my office and made his plea for the entry of our congregation into the Council. In the course of the conversation (which lasted about an hour) he inferred that if I and my congregation had more of the kind of love spoken of in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, we would be more than ready to join the Council. Not to join, in his estimate, constituted a lack of Christian love. I invited the Council representative to take a closer look at the chapter, especially the phrase now under consideration. He was invited to consider the thought that genuine Christian love demanded the exact opposite of what he was suggesting. Christian love demanded that we not join this unionistic and liberal council with its propensity to perpetuate the status-quo (unionism and liberalism) in our Ottawa area.

Love finds no joy in evil. It is repelled by injustice, wrong, iniquity, falsehood, and deceitfulness. Christian love does not rejoice in the daily parade of depravity and law-breaking reported by the TV. It does not gloat over the neighbor's sins. It is not happy to note instances of false doctrine and practice as taught and tolerated in sections of the visible church.

The old Adam gets satisfaction from keeping an account of the evil found in others. It gets a "kick" out of recounting instances of iniquity. It carries on this kind of activity for its own sake for it makes people look good in their own eyes. Such are the self-righteous. They are the image builders who refuse to let God rebuild them in the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

But the soul forgiven its evil by the Heavenly Father for the sake of what Jesus did on the cross finds no joy in evil. Increasingly, truth, and the pursuit of truth becomes the goal and joy of life. The new man in Christ seeks satisfaction in the sterling values. When truth prevails, it wears a smile. Particularly is this true in matters pertaining to The Faith. It is joyful whenever and wherever the pure Word of God is being taught.

Christian love rejoices when the Word of God holds sway from the pulpit, in the class-room, at the Pastor-Teacher Conference, through the church periodicals, and so forth. It is happy to offer its children Sunday school materials which are sound in doctrine. It is pleased to note that God is maintaining a remarkable degree of agreement in doctrine and practice within our Synod. It finds joy in working for the promotion of the true teachings of the Bible as they are reflected in authentic Lutheranism.

Christian love, finding its source and sustaining power in Jesus Christ, "Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. This most beautiful refrain finds expression in the *Amplified New Testament*, "Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, its ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances and it endures everything (without weakening)."

My dear friends, when the love of Christ comes to live in our soul we won't let evil conquer us, but we will conquer evil with good. (Compare Romans 12:21.)

LOVE NEVER ENDS

V.8 "Love never fails; but whether prophecies, they shall be done away; whether tongues, they shall cease; whether knowledge it shall be done away. V.9 For in part we know, and in part we prophesy; V.10 but when may come that which is perfect, then that in part shall be done away. V.11 When I was an infant, as an infant I spoke, as an infant I thought, as an infant I reasoned;

⁴¹ Ibid., p.270

but when I became a man, I did away with the things of the infant. For we see now through a glass obscurely, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know according as also I have been known" (literal).

"Love never fails." The Greek for "fails," ἐκπίπτει (ekpiptei) denotes the fading of flowers, the falling of trees and limbs, etc. The same verb is used in Romans 9:6, "not however ... has failed the word of God." Also in Mark 13:25, "And the stars of heaven shall fall," Since the love spoken of here by Paul does not ekpiptei, that is, does not cease, does not come to an end, we can only conclude that it is eternal. That this is the correct interpretation we learn from V.13 where we are told that love μένει (menei) abides or continues.

Much has been said and written about human love. Perhaps no word in our vocabulary receives as much attention. It is a topic about which almost everyone has some opinion. However, most of the ideas expressed are about as long-lasting as yesterday's hit recording. It must come as a relief to know that there is such a commodity as genuine, lasting love. It is a love that always succeeds. It never fails. It cannot die. It is eternal. It is God's kind of love, for God "is love," This love existed in the heart of the Father even before the creation of matter. This love continues in the perfect world to come.

The next section poses some questions: When will prophecies be "done away"? When will tongues "cease"? When will knowledge be "done away"? Will these spiritual phenomena cease sometime between the time when Paul penned his letter and the end of time; or, will they end with the second coming of Christ?

William G. Bellshaw presents a telling argument for the stopping of γλωσσαι (gloosai), tongues, with the completion of the New Testament Canon. His argument runs as follows:

"Since the New Testament was not complete, this gift was needed to validate the message which was being preached. After the canon of the Bible was completed, this gift was no longer necessary. Such is the explicit testimony of 1 Corinthians 13. The words of verse nine assert that tongues will cease. When will this be? The succeeding verses answer the question. It is important to note that Paul places the emphasis in the next verse on the twofold use of the word 'part.' Literally he said: 'For in part we are knowing, and in part we are prophesying.' The incomplete nature of the revealed Word of God is thus emphasized. But there is a time when it will be completed. Paul refers to the finished product as 'that which is perfect' (verse 10). Though some may refer the word 'perfect' to Christ, this interpretation cannot be sustained. This adjective (used as a noun) is in the neuter gender. Therefore, it is a reference to the finished (perfect) or completed Word of God. If it referred to Christ, it would be in the masculine gender.

"With the completion of the New Testament there no longer was a need for men to be used as instrumentalities to give forth God's authoritative message. This is now contained in the written Word. Men now simply proclaim it. The gift of tongues authenticating these messages also was no longer necessary. All of the things relating to this partial testimony will be made idle or rendered inoperative (the literal meaning of 'shall be done away'). The gift of tongues and related gifts were for the first years of the church's history (verse 11), while God was still in the process of revealing His Word to mankind (verse 12)."⁴²

We admit that there is much in this argument that we find attractive (e.g. support for the Doctrine of Scripture and an argument against the modern "glossolalia"), but we doubt that Bellshaw's approach is in agreement with the text. He operates with the premise that all those statements referring to completion and perfection are to be applied to the completed canon of Scripture. In so doing Bellshaw appears to overlook V.12. He would have the verse read as follows: "For we see now (while the canon is incomplete) through a glass obscurely, but then(when the canon is complete) face to face; now (incomplete canon) I know in part, but

⁴² William G. Bellshaw, "The Confusion of Tongues," Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol.120 (April-June,1963, pp.151-152 (Quoted from Conference Essay by Melvin C.Smith)

then (completed canon) I shall know according as also I have been known."

But the "face to face" and the "I shall know according as also I have been known." cannot refer to the time after the canon was completed. They denote the condition which will prevail after the parousia, the second coming of Christ-Although the New Testament books were not all recorded when Paul penned 1 Corinthians, yet the Apostle had a thorough grasp of the spiritual truths contained in the completed canon. Yet, he admits that his spiritual vision was less than perfect, for he compares it to the reflection cast in the imperfect ancient mirrors which were made of polished metal. But "then" (in heaven) spiritual vision will be "face to face." "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). At the present time the knowledge of Paul is imperfect but then he shall ἐπιγνώσομαι (epignosomai), thoroughly know. He shall know even as he was known by God in his conversion. P.E. Kretzmann states, "...in heaven every believer will see, know, understand the fullness of the divine essence, attributes, plans, counsels in a perfect and blessed understanding, so thoroughly as he himself was known of God when the Lord changed his heart in conversion."⁴³ In this context Luther comments: "I shall know Him then in the clearest possible manner, without covering; for the covering was not taken from Him, but from me, for He has none before Him."⁴⁴

The "in part we are knowing, and in part we are prophesying" is not referring to the "...incomplete nature of the revealed Word of God..." (see above); rather it refers to the incomplete knowledge of the Corinthian Christians before they would see God "face to face." V. 10 tells us that that incomplete knowledge shall be replaced by complete knowledge. Paul is not here saying that an incomplete Scripture shall be replaced or augmented by a completed Scripture. (Let it be noted here that the completeness of the Scriptures lies not in the fact that they reveal all that could be revealed, but in the fact that what they do reveal is sufficient, inerrant, and infallible.) V.11 illustrates that there is no further need for the imperfect when the perfect comes. A man has no further need for childish ways. There is no further need for the light of moon and stars when the sun comes up. You blow out the candles when the power comes back on after the electrical storm. In heaven many gaps of our imperfect knowledge will be filled in. Now, in a sense, we are infants; then, we shall have reached our majority.

In Vv. 8-12 Paul highlights the enduring quality of Christian love when he refers to the transitory nature of some spiritual gifts that had been bestowed upon the Christians in Corinth. Great as they were, they must always be kept in proper perspective. Prophecy, in the sense of predicting forthcoming events would be fulfilled, and thus serve no further purpose. The gift of speaking in unknown languages would cease. (When remains an open question.) Knowledge which is only partial would be superceded by a full grasp of the truth. On the other hand, love never dies.

When Laymen, Teachers, and Pastors radiate this kind of love in their interpersonal relationships, things are bound to happen in our Michigan District. The unsaved surrounding our various churches will begin to see Christian love as the love that never fails. By God's grace they may come to a saving faith in the source of all love--the Triune God.

St. Paul concludes his psalm of love (V.13), "And now abides faith, hope, love; these three things; but the greater of these is love" (literal).

Faith is confidence. It is the assurance that for the sake of Jesus our sins are cleansed away. It is the trust that God is our dear Heavenly Father. In the ungodly atmosphere of Corinth this confidence was of course threatened. However, in heaven, the trust between the Corinthians and their Creator would be firmly established forever. This side of eternity their faith in God's love was often weak. Once they (and we) shed the sinful nature, confidence in God will never waver.

In heaven, the saints of all ages shall have the joyful and confident expectation of receiving only good from God. We will always be able to hope for the best. Since heaven is eternal, it will not be enjoyed all at once. Happy expectations will be a part of the heavenly bliss. Now, hopes are often thwarted. Then, hope will never be frustrated.

Wonderful and great as this faith and hope is, love is greater! Without the love of God there could be no

⁴³ Kretzmann, op.cit., Vol.#2, p.153

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.153

faith. There would be no hope. Christians have faith and hope for the future because God loves them in Christ Jesus. This gives us confidence and hope for the future. This love emanating from the Triune God lasts forever. Holy Scripture says so!

It is this love which builds the Church of God. And so Paul admonishes the Corinthians and the Michigan District, "Pursue love" (14:1).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Analytical Greek Lexicon, New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers.

Berry, George Ricker. *The Interlinear Literal Translation of The Greek New Testament*. Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1960.

Kretzmann, Paul E. *Popular Commentary of the Bible New Testament Vol. II*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Lange, John Peter. *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures Volume 10*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.

Niewenhuis, Calvin W. *A Peek At Pentecostalism*. *Christian News*, Vol. 4, No. 18 Monday, May 24, 1971.

Smith, Melvin C. *The Charisma of Glossolalia*. Conference Essay, Metropolitan North Pastoral Conference, Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Hartland, Wisconsin, May 27, 1968: Mimeographed, Seminary Book Store.

Tappert, Theodore G. *The Book of Concord*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Young. *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*.