

## Love

### By Wor. Bro. Alphonse Cerza

*LOVE is a four-lettered word which frequently finds its way into the writings of Masonic author Bro. Alphonse Cerza. In this Short Talk Bulletin Bro. Cerza shares some interesting thoughts on the subject of LOVE. We thank him for his brotherly love in preparing these thoughts.*

The word "love" in the English language has many meanings and is used to describe a variety of feelings. In other languages there is more than one word available to describe different feelings and clearly differentiating between the degree of warmth which is intended when the word is used. For example, in the Greek language there are three words available to describe one's feeling. The word "agape" expresses an unselfish feeling which one person has for another as well as the love of God. The word "eros" expresses the feeling which one person has for a person of the opposite sex, and is reflected in the English word "erotic." The word "philo" expresses the feeling which a person has in other matters. This word was utilized when the word "Philadelphia" was selected as the name of the famous city located in Pennsylvania and means "brotherly love."

The comprehensive meaning of the word "love" becomes apparent when one consults any standard English dictionary. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1969) is a good illustration. It brings out the idea that the word describes extreme or intense affection as compared with such related words as "fondness" and "devotion." It states that "love suggests a feeling more intense and less susceptible to control than that associated with the other words of this group." In considering the wide range of feelings that can be experienced, we find love at one end which describes a favorable excessive fondness or affection and at the other end the undesirable feeling of hate. In between these two extremes are found such words as like, regard, tenderness, desire, yearn, cherish, admire, etc.

All the great religions of the world admonish their members to love one another, as we express the rule in English. We must recognize that the sacred writings of these religions are written in a foreign language and that the word "love" may have lost its correct meaning when translated into English. It has been customary in translations to use the word "love" in English in the belief that it comes closest to the meaning intended in the original religious works. This may or may

not be a specifically correct translation. The universal existence of this word in holy writings may be illustrated by an examination of the Holy Bible. In the Old Testament (Revised Standard Version) we find "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). In the New Testament we find a number of passages: "This I command you, to love one another" (John 15:17); "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44). Illustrations from other great religions are noted such as the Chinese character *si* which conveys the idea of "love". The Confucian virtue known as 'jen' is variously translated as "goodness", "benevolence", "human-heartedness", 'love.' Mohammed, in his Speeches and Table-Talk, said, "He who is not loving to God's creatures and to his own children, God will not be loving to him." Similar sentiments are expressed in the holy books of all the great religions of the world.

The use of the word "love" is too broad to be applicable to Freemasonry. Closer are the words "brotherly love." the Holy Bible uses these words in a number of places. in Romans (12:10) appears "Love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor." In Hebrews (13: 11) we find "Let brotherly love continue." In Peter II (1:7) we find "brotherly affection with love." Better known are the words of the Gentle Carpenter when He said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another." The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Aramaic and Creek. The idea of loving one another was not one of the Ten Commandments, but it does appear in the Old Testament (as quoted from Leviticus above) so that the rule was not really a "new" one. It was intended to call attention to the disputing and arguing that was going on about the laws and customs which amounted to hair-splitting. The Gentle Carpenter was urging his listeners to return to the basic meaning of the rules of human conduct. In a sense, He was restating a universal Truth that has stood the test of time.

The idea of love has been extolled in many ways through the ages. For example, the fifteenth edition of Bartlett 's Familiar Quotations (1980), has over five pages with three columns, listing quotations explaining "love".

Dante's Divine Comedy is one of the great epic works of world literature. It starts with a feeling of despair. On the door of the Inferno (hell) are the words: "Abandon every hope, you that enter." By the time the trip was over, after going through Paradise, a comparison is made with the Geometer who applies himself to measuring the circle with his desire and his will. revolving like a wheel that is easily moved "by the Love which moves the sun and other stars."

Love exists everywhere and permeates all human activities from personal relationships to offices located on Madison Avenue. Here are a few examples that quickly come to mind. Many people classify June as the "love month" because so many marriages take place during this month. February 14 is known as Valentine's Day and is dedicated to the idea of romantic love. In a recent magazine advertisement glowingly praising the vacation attractions of one of our Midwestern states, it is said, "When you want to get away and enjoy all the things you love. . ." A dog kennel not far from my home has a large sign with these words: "Archer Puppies. Buy

Some Love – Woof, Woof." On a recent television commercial, baby diapers were advertised called "Luvs". For many years there has been syndicated in many newspapers all over the country a small item with the title "Love is..." It is usually followed with a picture of a comic boy and girl with a short, appropriate statement. Here are several illustrations of words added at the bottom of the item: "Having respect for her point of view"; after a picture of the boy and girl riding a horse, the words "horsing around together"; and after a picture of the boy with a spade in one hand and wiping his forehead with a handkerchief, the words "licking the garden in shape for her."

Even the world of sports has not escaped the word "love." In tennis the word is used to keep score. Each tennis player's score starts with "O" or "Love" at the beginning of the game. This is not intended to mean that the players are in love with each other, nor is it intended to convey the idea that the game is promoting a religious or moral lesson. The word enters the game from the French word "l'oeuf" meaning "the egg." When the word is pronounced in English, it sounds like the word "love," and thus became part of the game.

Love has also reached the United States Post Office. On February 1, 1982, a stamp was released in Boston, Massachusetts with yellow, green, red, purple and blue colored flowers arranged to form the word LOVE. The official description of this twenty-cent stamp is as follows:

"Designed by artist Mary Faulconer of New York City, the 'LOVE' stamp visually embraces the warmth and joy of the very word itself. To symbolize 'LOVE', gaily colored flowers were selected to create each letter, 'to give form to the word and convey a sense of meaning, delicacy and strength at the same time,' according to the artist. The letter 'L' is formed by miniature red poppies' the letter 'O' by painted daisies and Johnny-jump-ups (miniature pansies); the 'V' by cornflowers (or bachelor's buttons); and the 'E' was created with coralbells. "

Since the dawn of history, poets and song writers have extolled the attractions of romantic love. In recent years a friendly sort of love has been expounded in lectures, television programs, and several books by Dr. Leo Buscaglia, Professor of Education at the University of Southern California. The large and enthusiastic audiences which he attracts to his lectures prove the subject of Love is never out-of-style. When his book *Living, Loving & Learning* became a best seller for many weeks, it created interest in his earlier book entitled *Love*. Before too many weeks, it also became a best seller. His basic theme is that love knows no age; each person needs to love and be loved; before you can love others you must first love yourself; and that love involves responsibility. In his lectures he exhibits an unbounded enthusiasm which is contagious as he urges his listeners to reach out and touch someone and thereby help themselves and the other person.

Because the word "love" in English is a broad one, it is not unusual for persons to use it incorrectly. For example, a person who says, "I love apple pie," really means, "I enjoy eating apple pie." The religious precept that you shall "love your neighbor as yourself" can be easily misunderstood and may stem from the failure of the translation to convey the correct intended

meaning. Sometimes this rule is criticized as being impractical because one cannot love another person as much as himself. The truth is that the rule is practical, but the word used in English is not the correct one. Using one possible definition of the English word, if you have an excessive love of yourself as a person, you can hardly be expected to carry this sort of feeling toward others.

This rule cannot be followed literally, especially if one applies the dictionary definition that the word "love" means the excessive love of one's self. It brings to mind the story in Greek mythology of Narcissus who was loved by Echo, a mountain nymph. Narcissus was too much in love with himself and spurned her love. Echo became very sad and Aphrodite, the god of Love, decided to punish Narcissus for his attitude. He was induced to drink water at a certain fountain. Seeing his own image reflected in the pool, Narcissus was so seized with a passion for himself that he pined away. The gods transformed him into a flower which now bears his name. Because of this story, psychoanalysts describe excessive self-love as Narcissism. Sometimes this defect in one's feelings directs one's sexual instinct towards one's own body. The person afflicted with Narcissism often is indifferent to other persons unless, by attracting their favorable attention, the self-love of the narcissist is enhanced. Since this is not a normal or desirable trait in a human being, we can reasonably assume that the idea of "self-love" is not meant by this religious commandment. Again we learn that the English word "love" does not correctly describe the feeling that is meant to be encouraged.

A consideration of this subject leads us to remember the great part that the word "charity" plays in Masonic philosophy. It is derived from the Latin word "caritas" which is translated to the word "love." Older translations of the Holy Bible translated the word to "charity" but recent translations have the language closer to contemporary understanding and have used the word "love" instead of the word "charity." This is not a radical change because even the giving of alms should be accompanied with the spirit of love rather than any other feeling.

The English word which would more correctly reflect what is meant by this universal religious rule of love would be the word "Kindness." 'the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1969) defines "charity" as "the quality or state of being kind" and it defines the word "kind" as being "of a friendly, generous or hospitable nature; warmhearted; good." Also included in the definition is the idea of being charitable, helpful, compassionate, humane, considerate, tolerant, courteous, gentle, and showing sympathy and understanding. All of these traits are admirable and are easier to understand in one's heart and to develop in one's conduct than the idea of "love" which is correctly defined as an excessive feeling of warmth and admiration.

The word "kindness" appears in many places in the Holy Bible. In Genesis (20:13) Abraham says: "This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say to me, He is my brother." In Job (6:14) it is said: "He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty." In Proverbs (21 21) it is said: "He who pursues righteousness and kindness

will find life and honor." In Galatians (5:22) it is said: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness." Sophocles many year's ago made the following observation: "For kindness begets kindness evermore." Henry Bur!on gave the following advice: "Have you had any kindness shown? Pass it on." Aesop, the ancient writer of stories with a moral, in The Lion and the Mouse said: "No act of kindness is ever wasted." Rousseau wrote: "What wisdom can we find that is greater than kindness? "

There are times when the words "love" and " kindness" are linked together. William Wordsworth did this in 1798 in his "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey." He said: "The best portion of a good man's life, his little nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love." Las Casas, in his Apologetic History wrote: " ... the method that is proper and natural to men is used, that is, love and gentleness and kindness. '

Since the rule requires you to be as kind to others as you are to yourself, the question arises, what does one do to be kind to himself? In order to be able to be kind toward others, you must maintain your physical and mental health by doing the things in your everyday life that will maintain your strength and well being, do interesting and meaningful work that gives you pleasure, and lead a good, clean and moral life. Only in this way will you be happy and able to be kind to others.

All of the traits covered in the word "kindness" are good and easier to follow, understand, and develop than the ideas conveyed with the broad and indefinite word "love", which, strictly speaking, means an excessive feeling. Many persons rebel at the idea of loving one's neighbor but welcome the idea of being kind. We might go so far as to say that the word "kindness" is the magic word which can solve many personal and community problems. It is not an exaggerated word such as "love", and covers a variety of situations. Consider how easy it is to be kind by using at the proper time the words "please," or "thank you," or "I am sorry." Closely related to the word "kindness" is the word "respect." In both words is the implied recognition of the value of the other person's feelings.

In Freemasonry the problem is simplified because the tenets of the Craft are Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. The word "brotherly" modifies the broad meaning of the word "love" when used by itself. The Prestonian lecture of the First Degree describes the beginning of the statement as follows: "By the exercise of Brotherly Love we are taught to regard the whole human species as one family – the high and the low, the rich and the poor – who, as created by the one almighty parent, and inhabitants of the same planet, are to aid, support, and protect each other. On this principle Masonry unites men of every country, sect and opinion, and causes true friendship to exist among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance." The addition of the word "brotherly" before the word "love" not only restricts the meaning but reduces the possibility of misinterpretation.

Dr. James Anderson, in his famous Constitutions of the Freemasons, published in 1723, lists many Charges to a member of the Craft. The list ends as follows: "Finally, All these Charges you are to observe, and all those that shall be communicated to you in another way; cultivating Brotherly-Love, the Foundation and Capstone, the Cement and Glory of this Ancient Fraternity." We further carry forth this thought by incorporating into our ceremonies the 133rd Psalm which starts with the words: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell in unity."

There comes to mind the story in Genesis about Cain killing his brother Abel. When the Lord inquired (4:8-9) of Cain: "Where is Abel your brother?" he replied: "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" in Freemasonry there can be no doubt whatsoever that this question must be answered in the affirmative.

The Scottish Rite of Freemasonry has a degree called the Rose Croix Degree which has as its theme the quotation from the New Testament: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another." While to a Christian member this may represent a religious Truth, it is not so intended in this Degree but is designed to express a universal Truth recognized by all the great religions of the world. The emblem of this Degree is a cross upon which rests a rose. The cross is a symbol of space and infinity; the rose is a symbol of the dawn. Sometimes a banner is used in this Degree with the words: "Faith, Hope, and Charity," which are words found in all the great religions. The basic message of this Degree is that all men are brothers and that we are our brother's keeper.

The theme of love is found in the goals and purposes of the appendant Masonic bodies and youth groups, emphasizing the promotion of "brotherly love," "love of country," "love of parents," and the adherence to the principles of charity, relief and kindness.

If we substitute the word "kindness" for the word "love" we are really conveying the idea of what is truly meant by "love" in Freemasonry. The idea is well expressed in a poem whose author is unknown:

If we can ease a brother's sorrow  
And aid him in distress;  
If we can brighten his tomorrow  
With deeds of kindliness;  
Then we have found God's meaning  
Of the word called Charity  
For when we give ourselves away  
We've found life's mystery.

There have been innumerable stories written in which Love is the vital core of the narrative. The greatest love story ever written is the one that explains that God loves each and every one

of us; that we can best show our appreciation for His love by emulating Him; always being kind in words, thoughts, and deeds when dealing with His children.

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