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Love, 1932.

"LOVE"

Third in the Series

"BASIC REALITIES OF LIFE"

BY

ABBA HILLEL SILVER, D. D.
The Temple, Feb. 28th, 1932

Nothing really new can be said of a theme as old as love. The mind of man has dwelt upon it since the beginning of its reflective life, in every age and in every clime.

Philosophers have meditated upon it. The poets have sung of it. Love has been the most prolific theme of art and literature.

Every vital experience of life comes to each man as something new and fresh, like an amazingly new revelation. And yet this experience, as far as the human race is concerned, is as old as the human race itself.

Love is as eternal as man and yet it is new-born with every man. And because it is new with every man, in spite of its eternal quality, it has to be re-defined, in a way, with every man, with every generation. And the ancient wisdom which was garnered long ago has to be retold in every age.

Love is not a word which means one thing. Rather it is the "open ^{sesame} ~~serum~~" to a whole treasure-house of many varied, precious, human affections. There is the love of a man for a maid. There is the love of a parent for a child. There is brotherly love and the love of a friend. There is the love of nature and the love of art. There is the love of country and the love of honor. There is the mystic's love of God and the philosophers intellectual love of God. But in all of these varieties of the love-experience of man, there are, I believe, certain constant and universal qualities. And the first of these is the desire to be of service to the object of one's love.

Love generates an inner, voluntary mandate to serve, help, protect, enhance and satisfy the object of one's love. ✓

Fear likewise generates such a mandate of service. But in the case of fear, it is external and involuntary. The compulsion to serve comes from without. In the case of love the compulsion to serve comes from within and although it is not altogether free, it is yet self-imposed and in its own rights, it is autonomous.

This quality of service in love is present even when love is not entirely disinterested. When we love our children we wish to do the utmost for them. That quality of wanting to do the utmost, that quality of aspiration, of ambition in the noblest sense of the word, which love generates, is the most relentless as it is the most rewarding quality in real love.

Then too, my friends, love is never abstract. It is always directed to a purpose and it is always bound up with reality. Love is an irresistible attraction towards something and always expresses itself in action of one kind or another: "And thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might."

It is in acts of spiritual mightiness that great love expresses itself, not in dreamy, ethereal romancing. For love is of the very warp and woof of life. Love is of the very business of living. While the blossoms and the fruits of love may be beautiful its roots reach down to the dark, dank substantial soil of fundamental human needs.

The reason poets have sung so much of love is not because it is something shadowy and unsubstantial and airy,

as it were. That would be to misunderstand the nature of poetry and of love. The reason so much great poetry has clustered around the concept of love is because it is so real, - the most real and vivid experience, the drive of life, the passion of all of our joys and sorrow, the supreme compensation of our existence.

Love is nothing abstract and it is always a summons to duty and to task. And however humble and commonplace and unpoetic these tasks may be, they are, nevertheless, the very technique of love and without them love becomes mere vamping and moonshine.

There are a great number of people who are in love with love and who beguile themselves into believing that they are in love. When a mother loves her child, that love spontaneously will express itself in one hundred and one simple, commonplace, routine acts of service to her child, - feeding, bathing, nursing, dressing, mending his clothes, protecting his health, supervising his play, and his studies, and guiding him step by step and day by day along the road of life. And it is these very unheroic, very simple, commonplace and prosaic acts

which constitute the sacrament of maternal love. Without them it is meaningless.

And so it is with all manner of real human love. Love of country for instance. The love of country must be understood as a composite of detailed acts, of duties, of obligations which a man who loves his country performs. Not the waving of a flag or patrioteering or braggadocio, but performance of the duties of citizenship and the obedience to the laws of a country, day by day; doing one's best to help preserve the best ideals of his country in his home, in his office and in his profession. That's what makes up love of country. Love is a summons to duty and task.

Love of one's friend, that too means vital and daily concern and interest in the life and problems of our friends. The eager readiness to share with them ^{any} ~~in~~ substance, financially, intellectually, spiritually; the desire to give and take of the best in us; to cooperate. Tasks and duties, - through them great love expresses itself.

When we speak of love, especially of love between a man and a woman, we are, I am afraid in danger of committing one of two mistakes. Mistakes due to false conceptions of the nature

of love, both of them extreme, both of them unreal, both of them harmful. The danger either of cheapening love, of vulgarizing it or of exalting it to a state of transcendentalism until it becomes too great altogether for daily use. Both of them are mistakes.

We may, for example, think of love, conjugal love, physiologically, in terms of sex, as a biologic necessity, - which it of course is. It is nature's summons for the perpetuation of the life of the species. Immature and vulgar minds think of it vulgarly. But great art and great literature never did. Love is the reverent theme of most of the great classics of art and literature which clearly understood that the spiritual can not be completely disassociated or disengaged from the physical phases of life. But there is the danger of thinking of love in terms of its physical origin. That is to reduce human life to the level of the animal. To ignore that spiritual super-structure which the human race has built of the physical phases of life, is to undo the work of the ages and to turn man back to the lowest stage in his evolutionary climb. A theory of love which takes cognizance only of its physical element will vulgarize and cheapen life and human relationships.

Much of this vulgarization has unfortunately set in, in our present-day civilization. Sex is too restless, too impermanent, too unstable an instinct in man for man to build his entire life upon it. The home and the spiritual rearing of children require much more than that.

On the other hand there is the great danger of what someone has called 'romantic infantinism' in our discussion of love. There are men and women who think of love as something quite exotic, something made out of gossamer and moonshine and enduring sweetness. I am afraid that our novels and moving pictures have predetermined our minds to that concept of love. In our moving pictures, romance always precedes marriage, and ends there.

Hollywood loses all interest in a couple after its marriage. That love may be the product of married life, as well as the precursor of everyday life, seldom occurs to them. Young men and women who are themselves unaware of their own imperfections and shortcomings have somehow been taught to expect perfection in others. Not having been trained and prepared for the duties and responsibilities of married life they are not prepared for the hardships, trials, disappointments and defeats.

Now a dose of common sense would save many people from sad and crushing disillusionments. It is amazing that in this practical age we still permit ourselves to indulge in orgies of romantic infantinism. In the long run love between a man and woman is built, not upon infatuation, but upon companionship, upon a weighing of destinies, upon a gladsome sharing of common devotions and common tasks and upon a calm, steady, patient faith.

Love is not a matter for romantic morons. In the wedded love life of people there are other bells besides the wedding bells of golden dreams. There are the solemn bells tolling life's struggles and labors. There are the mournful bells, tolling life's sorrows and tragedies. There are the tinkling bells of children's laughter. There are gorgeous bells of triumph and achievement. And there are the bells which toll the knell of parting day. And love must be prepared for the complete symphony of existence, the harsh notes as well as the soft, the sweet as well as the sad.

There is another quality which to my mind is constant and universal in all human love and it is this. Love is free and love is not free. Love is free in the sense that it liberates within

us our noblest instincts and our best talent. We want to do the best, we want to achieve the most when love has come to dwell in our hearts. On the other hand it is not free, it binds us irrevocably to the object of our love.

In that sense 'free love' is a contradiction in terms because great love is never free. Every human alliance which is meaningful, every great devotion, is a tie which binds. It demands a measure of exclusive and concentrated patience.

A prophet who is enthralled by his vision is never free. The moment he feels himself free, he has lost his vision. And so it is with married love between a man and woman. It is free and it is not free. It is a tie that binds in the deeper sense of the word. But it may bind as a garland of roses or it may bind as shackles of iron. And that is the only difference.

And yet another quality which I believe is constant in all human love, is this. There is in love a lift. The difference between love and non-love, is the difference between speech and song. As long as it is song, it is love. As soon as it is monotone, it is dead. As long as there is splendor in the skies

it is love; as soon as all the color is drained, it is dead. When there are no more birds singing in Arcady, it is no longer Arcady, - no longer love.

The man who is deeply in love with his work, his art, his cause or even his hobby, not to speak of the man who is in love with his wife and children, - that man experiences a mood of calm exaltation. It is in a sense an intensification of life, a higher degree of living.

If you have that you are in love.

And there is a lift to love in yet another way. Love is a challenge to rise, to grow. We want to be constantly more and more worthy of the object of our love. A man wants to look up to the woman he loves. A woman wants to be able to look up to the man whom she loves. The moment the mind of one or the other has to stoop, that moment love itself begins to droop and to languish. Neither in pity nor in contempt does great love thrive. Great love thrives in pride, in respect, in admiration.

Many people unfortunately forget that as we grow

older, as our bodies grow older, as our physical attractiveness begins to disappear, our minds must grow bigger, our spirits must grow stronger to compensate love for the ravages of time. Years, my friends, have a way of drawing people apart unless they make a great effort to remain together, to keep pace with each other through growth and development. When exquisite youth leaves us we must be prepared for an exquisite age. And age can be exquisite. You have seen it and I have seen it. Exquisite age is, in terms of beauty of soul, richness of mind and fine loyalty and noble interests. Age may be beautiful and noble. And love is enobled if it is real love. To such an age great love makes us grow.

And lastly, my friends, great love is a refuge.

The Psalmist whose song I read this morning, speaks of the God Whom he loves as his Refuge, his Tower. That's what love is, -the dream we build becomes our refuge and our sanctuary when our souls need refuge. Life may rob us of all things, as it frequently does. It can not rob us of our love because love is built out of immaterial substance.

The artist whom life has tried and afflicted, perhaps denied him his legitimate rewards, can yet find a measure of solace and comfort in his art; the musician, in his music. A man who has championed a great cause through life and was always misunderstood and mocked and hated by the men whom he wanted to serve and help, that man will find comfort and rest for his tried soul in his love. That my friends, is the test of all great love.

Is it your refuge, your sanctuary? When your days bring you anguish and your nights bring you tears, can you retreat to that holy quiet of your love and there find surcease from sorrow and suffering? If so, then you have been blessed with the richest gift which life can offer us, - the gift of love.

1. Nothing new can really be said for there as old as love. The mind & man has dwelt upon it since the beginning, its reflection life, and in every age and in every clime, philosophers have meditated upon it and poets have sung of it. It has been and is the most prolific and rewarding motif of art and literature. Every vital Exp. of life comes ^{to each man} new & fresh, with the impact of an amazing revolution, to each man, yet these vital Exps., of which love is one, are as old as man himself. They are eternal as life, and yet are renewed with each human being.
2. And because they are new with each man, ~~that~~ in spite of their ^{and each age} ~~temporal~~ quality, they must be redefined ~~and~~ to each man, and the old wisdom ^{from them} gleaned in the long ages, must be retold.
3. Love is not a word which means one thing. It is, ^{rather} the "per se" to a whole measure. There are many + varied forms of human affections. There is the love of a man for a maid, and the love of ~~with~~ parent for a child; there is brotherly love and the love of friends; there is the mythic love of god and ^{philosophical} intellectual love of god; there is love of country and love of honor; there is love of nature and love of art.
4. But in all the variations of love-experience there is a few constant + universal element - ^{on these} the desire to serve the object of our love. Love generates an inner, voluntary mandate to help, satisfy, protect or enhance the ~~object~~ ^{things we} love. This element is present even when love is not entirely disinterested. There also unfolds ~~the~~ a mandate of service, but it is external and involuntary. The compulsion comes from without. In love, it evaporates from our being, and while not entirely

free, it is, ~~yet~~ ^{self-imposed and} more ~~thinks~~, in it our right, autonomous. The quality and degree of ~~seeing~~ ^{seeing} which fear enforces, will be determined by the demands, ~~that~~ ^{the thing} which we fear - and even more. In the case of love - there ~~will be~~ is a continuing desire to excel in our service.

5. When we love our children, we wish to do the utmost for them. When we love our work, we try to ~~until our dying day~~ ^{perfect ourselves in it}. Then, for love of their ~~faith~~ ^{faith} ~~of their~~ ^{at their} ~~country~~ ^{cause} ~~have~~ ^{have} ~~lost~~ ^{lost} ~~their~~ ^{their} ~~lives~~ ^{lives}. There is a quality of ambition ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~love~~ ⁱⁿ ~~which~~ ^{which} is as relentless as it is rewarding.

6. Love is nothing abstract. It is always directed to a purpose, and always bound up with reality. Love is an irresistible attraction to something, and expresses itself in actions. It is in act of Sp. migrations that great love expresses itself - not in dreamy, ethereal romancing. ~~It is~~ ^{For love} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~very~~ ^{very} ~~way~~ ^{way} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~life~~ ^{life}, & the very business of living. However beautiful the blossoms and fruit of love may be, its roots reach down to the dark, dark, ~~substantial~~ ^{substantial} soil of basic human needs. The reason so much poetry has clustered around the concept of love is not due to the fact that love is so unusual, shadowy and unsubstantial - this would be to misunderstand the real nature both of poetry and love - but because it is so very much the most vivid and real experience, the heart of living, the drive, the passion, sorrow and joy, the supreme consummation of life is here.

7. Love is a summons to duty, and to tasks, which humble, or commonplace, or physical tho they may be,

as get the very feeling of love. - without which
love is pure moonshine and vapor. Now are
many people who are in love with love and who
delude themselves into thinking that they really love.
The mother who loses her child will express that love
spontaneously in a hundred and one common-places,
unheroic acts of caring for the child - feeding and bathing
and nursing him and dressing, mending his clothes, ~~safe~~
guarding his health, putting him to play, ^{helping him step, step, step, step} ~~supervising him~~,
study, teaching, & correcting him. These simple, daily
times actions, at times laying out & daily actions are
in very truth, the sacrament of maternal love. Without
them theoretical love is meaningless. And so it is
with all manner of real human love. Love concretely
means a day application to the details of life and circumstances,
not just the idea of love itself. Love of a friend means vital interest
in one's private life and problems - an early readiness to
help them in distress, or advice, to give and take
of the best in us.

- up by two extremes - when thinking of
8. We stand in a two-fold danger ~~when we think of~~
~~possessing~~ love. That of cheapening it and that of exalting
it into a transcendence - removed from the common life
of man - "too ^{bright} for human nature's dear food".
I speak now particularly of the love which obtains
between a man and a woman, the love that most
people think of when they hear the word love -

9. WE may think of it as exclusively in terms, ^{sex} physiology, as a
biologic necessity, which, & cause, it is. It is natures function
to the perpetuation of the life, the species. I understand + vulgar
names ~~have~~ ^{are} thought of sex as a vulgar thing. So do the
prudish. But great religious, and great art, and great
literature never did. It is the reversal of them,
the great claims of mankind, ^{which clearly understands the importance of divorcing the sp. from the phy.} there is a danger however,
in reducing love to its sheer physical origins, for in today's
we are in danger of reducing man to the level of the
animal. To ignore the spiritual super-function which
the race has upon these physical foundations, is to
undo the work of ages and to return man to
the lowest levels of his evolutionary climb. For the man
to-day with a concept, how would prove a devastating
vulgarization and cheapening of life and human relationships.
This concept, ^{this vulgarization} has unfortunately set in our present-day civilization -
to the hunt and depredation. Sex ^{also} is too capricious and volatile
as a unit to build a permanent life union upon it. To have another
sp. within a childless marriage -

10. On the other hand, there is the danger of what a writer has
recently termed "romantic infatuation" (~~and~~)

10. On the other hand, there is the danger of what a writer has recently termed "romantic infantilism" (~~Part II~~)

1- That ^{we} have a something exotic, a thingy picked out of possessions and sentiment, ^{our} novels and movies pictures pre determine their mind, with the ten million picture all romance precedes wedding and all interest ends there. After a couple is married they no longer interest themselves in the very practical eye we still indulge in infantile ro- mantic types when it comes to the subject of wed- d and marriage. ~~The~~ young man is never expected to be perfect in the other a good deal

and being young do not anticipate any trials or hardships or failures.



common sense would have saved them such dis-
illusionment. ~~But~~ ^{For the very reason} ~~that~~ ^{that} is brist not upon infatuation but
upon comparateness, a weighing & distinctions, and a glee on
thorough ~~go~~ ⁱⁿ common distinctions and tastes, ^{a patient party}
For the ^{would} work life of man and woman there are other
bells beside the wedding bells & golden promise. There
are the solemn bells telling life's struggle and labor,
the mournful bells telling life's sorrow, the travelling
bells, children's laughter, the joyous bells of circumstance
and achievement, the bells which tell the knell
of parting day. We must have to be prepared
for the full responsibility, the excitement, the dash
into a wall or the soft the predest a well a the
tragic.

11- I said - ^{universal quality} ~~service~~ ^{There is another universal character} of all
love. It is free, and it is not free! It is free - in that
it gives the best impulses and talents of a person. It is
free in that it stimulates a man to do his
best. It is not free in that it brings one unwillingly to
the object of his love. ^{Free love is, in this sense, a contradiction in terms.} All basic human relations, asso-
ciations or destinies are this whole kind of the desire
a measure of exclusive, concentrated desires, Married
two, birds, but it may be as a paradise or as
a shackles of iron. Married people who seek divine

The prophet who is enthralled by his vision is no
longer free. The moment he feels himself free, he has
lost his vision.

12. There is no other quality in all human love. There is a
lift to it. There diff. but love & non-love is the diff.
bet. speech and song. As long as it is a song -
it is love. When it becomes a monotone - it is dead.
As long as there is splendor in the voice - it is love.
When all the color is drained - it is dead.
"When we find songs in Arcady" - it is no longer Arcady.
The man who is deeply in love with his art, or
his art, ^{or his cause} or even his hobby, not to speak of his wife, or
his children, or his friend, experiences a certain mood
of calm exaltation - which is an intensification of living,
a higher degree of living.

13. There is a lift to love we get from the sun. ~~It lifts~~
~~us~~. It challenges us to rise - to grow, we want to
become more authentic in the sight of the one we love.
If we are in love with our art, we try to perfect
ourselves in it, and this grants a aspiration present
to our dying day. A man wants to look up to
the human ^{to living} ~~human~~ woman. A woman wants to look up to her
man. When the sun sees the man to stop love,
^{waits in contempt not in pity} drops and laughs. As we grow older,
^{in bodies} our spirits must grow stronger, we must strive
to compensate love for the physical ravages of time.
People often forget it. Years draw people apart
unless they strive to keep it together - in growth and
development. We must prepare for inexhaustible age - when every year is young.

4. Love is a refuge. - The ~~man~~ ^{spoke} ~~have~~ ^{it} ~~which~~ ^{them} ~~is~~ ^{home} ~~built in~~
~~as much as~~ ^{our} ~~refuge~~ ^{refuge} ~~in old age.~~ The ^{spoke} ~~home~~
which our love builds becomes our refuge, when our
spirits seek sanctuary. The dreamer finds refuge
in his dream. The artist in his art. The musician
in his music. Lovers in their love. Life may
rob us of every thing we have. It cannot rob
us of our loves. ~~For they are~~ ~~built out of~~ They are
ours until death. May may buy their company
right their tears; in the heart, our love there is
the balan of filial. Then the wear are at
rest.

