

# WORKS OF LOVE

Søren Kierkegaard

*Translated by*  
HOWARD AND  
EDNA HONG

*Foreword by*  
GEORGE PATTISON

HARPERPERENNIAL  MODERNTHOUGHT

NEW YORK • LONDON • TORONTO • SYDNEY • NEW DELHI • AUCKLAND

# I

## Love's Hidden Life and Its Recognisability

by Its Fruits

---

"For each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush." *Luke 6: 44*

If it were true—as conceited shrewdness, proud of not being deceived, thinks—that one should believe nothing which he cannot see by means of his physical eyes, then first and foremost one ought to give up believing in love. If one did this and did it out of fear of being deceived, would not one then be deceived? Indeed, one can be deceived in many ways; one can be deceived in believing what is untrue, but on the other hand, one is also deceived in not believing what is true; one can be deceived by appearances, but one can also be deceived by the superficiality of shrewdness, by the flattering conceit which is absolutely certain that it cannot be deceived. Which deception is most dangerous? Whose recovery is more doubtful, that of him who does not see or of him who sees and still does not see? Which is more difficult, to awaken one who sleeps or to awaken one who, awake, dreams that he is awake? Which sight is more sorrowful, that which immediately and unrestrainedly moves to tears, like the sight of one unhappily deceived in love, or that which in a certain sense could tempt laughter, the sight of one who is self-deceived, whose foolish conceit of not being deceived is ludicrous, something to be laughed at, if its ludicrousness were not a still stronger expression for horror by signifying that he is not worth a tear?

To cheat oneself out of love is the most terrible deception; it is an eternal loss for which there is no reparation, either in time or in

eternity. For usually, whatever variations there may be, when there is talk about being deceived in love the one deceived is still related to love, and the deception is simply that it is not present where it was thought to be; but one who is self-deceived has locked himself out and continues to lock himself out from love. There is also talk about being deceived by life or in life; but he who self-deceptively cheated himself out of living—his loss is irredeemable. One who throughout his whole life has been deceived by life—for him the eternal can treasure rich compensation; but the person who has deceived himself has prevented himself from winning the eternal. He who because of love became a sacrifice to human deceit—what has he really lost when in eternity it turns out that love endures; whereas the deception is no more! But one who ingeniously deceived himself by cleverly falling into the snare of cleverness, alas, even if throughout his entire life he has in his own conceit considered himself happy, what has he not lost when in eternity it appears that he deceived himself! In the temporal world a man may succeed in getting along without love; he may succeed in slipping through life without discovering the self-deception; he may have the terrible success, in his conceit, of becoming proud of it; but in eternity he cannot dispense with love and cannot escape discovering that he has lost everything. How earnest existence is, how terrible it is, precisely when in chastisement it permits the wilful person to counsel himself, permits him to live on proud of—being deceived—until finally he is permitted to verify that he has deceived himself for eternity! The eternal does not let itself be mocked; it is rather that which does not need to use might but almightily uses a little mockery in order to punish the presumptuous in a terrible way. What is it that really binds the temporal and the eternal? What is it other than love, which therefore is before everything else and remains when all else is past. But just because love is the bond of the eternal and just because the temporal and the eternal are heterogeneous, to the earthly prudence of temporality love may seem to be a burden, and therefore in the temporal world it may seem a great relief to the sensualist to cast this bond of eternity away.

One who is self-deceived thinks, of course, that he is able to console himself, yes, to have more than conquered; a fool's conceit hides for him how inconsolable his life is. That he "has ceased sorrowing" we will not deny, but, nevertheless, what gain is this when salvation consists precisely in his beginning to sorrow earnestly over himself! Perhaps one who is self-deceived even thinks he is able to console others, who

would become a sacrifice to the deceit of perfidy; but what madness, when he who himself has lost the eternal wants to heal him who is at the extremity of sickness unto death. Perhaps the self-deceived, by an odd self-contradiction, even thinks he is being sympathetic with one who is unhappily deceived. But if you scrutinise his comforting words and healing wisdom, you will know love by its fruits—by the bitterness of mockery, by the sharpness of "good sense," by the poisonous spirit of distrust, by the penetrating chill of callousness—that is, by the fruits it will be known that there is no love in this kind of sympathy.

By its fruits one recognises the tree. "Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?" (Matthew 7: 16). If you expect to gather them there, you will not only pick in vain but the thorns will show you that you pick in vain. *For every tree is recognised by its own fruit.* It may well be that there are two fruits which very closely resemble each other; the one is healthful and good-tasting, the other is bitter and poisonous; sometimes, too, the poisonous fruit is good-tasting and the healthful fruit somewhat bitter in taste. In the same way love also is known by its *own* fruit. If one makes a mistake, it must be either because one does not know the fruit or because one does not know how to discriminate rightly in particular instances. For example, one may make the mistake of calling love that which is really self-love: when one loudly protests that he cannot live without his beloved but will hear nothing about love's task and demand, which is that he deny himself and give up the self-love of erotic love. Or a man may make the mistake of calling by the name of love that which is weak indulgence, the mistake of calling spoiled whimpering, or corrupting attachments, or essential vanity, or selfish associations, or flattery's bribery, or momentary appearances, or temporal relationships by the name of love. There is a flower called the flower of eternity, but there is also, remarkably, a so-called everlasting flower which, like perishable flowers, blooms only at a certain time of the year—what a mistake to call the latter a flower of eternity! And yet it is so deceptive at the moment of blossoming. But every tree is known by its own fruit. So also is love known by its own fruit and the love of which Christianity speaks is known by its own fruit—revealing that it has within itself the truth of the eternal. All other love, whether humanly speaking it withers early and is altered or lovingly preserves itself for a round of time—such love is still transient; it merely blossoms. This is precisely its weakness and tragedy, whether it blossoms for an hour or for seventy years—it merely blossoms; but Christian love is eternal. There-

fore no one, if he understands himself, would think of saying of Christian love that it blossoms; no poet, if he understands himself, would think of celebrating it in song. For what the poet shall celebrate must have in it the anguish which is the riddle of his own life: it must blossom and, alas, must perish. But Christian love abides and for that very reason is Christian love. For what perishes blossoms and what blossoms perishes, but that which *has being* cannot be sung about—it must be believed and it must be lived.

Yet when one says that love is recognised by its fruits, one also says thereby that love itself is in a certain sense in hiding and therefore can be known only by its revealing fruits. This is precisely the case. Every life, love's life also, is as such hidden and reveals itself in another form. The life of a plant is hidden; the fruit is the manifestation. The life of thought is hidden; the utterance of speech is the manifestation. The sacred words read above therefore have a double meaning; although they hiddenly speak only of one; openly there is only one thought contained in the statement, but there is also another hidden in it.

Let us, then, bring out both thoughts for consideration, since we shall now speak about:

#### LOVE'S HIDDEN LIFE AND ITS RECOGNISABILITY BY ITS FRUITS.

From whence comes love, where does it have its origin and its source; where is the place, its stronghold, from which it proceeds? Certainly this place is hidden or is in that which is hidden. There is a place in a human being's most inward depths; from this place proceeds the life of love, for "from the heart proceeds life."<sup>4</sup> But this place you cannot see, no matter how far you thrust in; the source withdraws itself into remoteness and hiding; even if you have thrust in as far as possible, the source is still always a bit farther in, like the source of a spring which just when you are nearest to it is farther away. From this place love proceeds in manifold ways, but by none of these ways can you thrust your way in to its hidden beginning. As God dwells in the light<sup>5</sup> from which streams every beam which lights the world and yet no one can penetrate back by these paths to see God, for the path of light changes to darkness when one turns toward the light: so love dwells in the hidden or is hidden in the inmost depths. As the flow of a spring lures by the murmuring persuasion of its rippling, yes, almost begs one to go along the path and not curiously wish to penetrate in to discover its source and reveal its secret; as the

rays of the sun invite men to observe by their help the glory of the world but reproachfully punish with blindness the presumptuous who try to turn about in order inquisitively and impudently to discover the origin of the light; as faith, beckoning, offers to be man's companion on life's way but turns to stone the impudent who turn about impudently to grasp it: so also is it the desire and prayer of love that its concealed source and its hidden life in the most inward depths may remain a secret, that no one inquisitively and impudently will disturbingly thrust his way in to see what he cannot see anyway, the joy and blessing of which, however, he forfeits by his curiosity. The suffering is always most painful when the doctor is obliged in operating to penetrate in to the more vital, the hidden parts of the body; in the same way the suffering is most painful and most devastating when someone, instead of rejoicing in the manifestations of love, wants the pleasure of penetrating in to it, that is, by disturbing it.

The hidden life of love is in the most inward depths, unfathomable, and still has an unfathomable relationship with the whole of existence. As the quiet lake is fed deep down by the flow of hidden springs, which no eye sees, so a human being's love is grounded, still more deeply, in God's love. If there were no spring at the bottom, if God were not love, then there would be neither a little lake nor a man's love. As the still waters begin obscurely in the deep spring, so a man's love mysteriously begins in God's love. As the quiet lake invites you to look at it but the mirror of darkness prevents you from seeing through it, so love's mysterious ground in God's love prevents you from seeing its source. When you think you are seeing it, then it is a reflection which deceives you, as if it were the bottom, this which only conceals the deeper bottom. As the clever cover to a treasure appears to be the floor, in order completely to hide the treasure, so the reflection deceptively appears to be the depth of the source—but only conceals that which is still deeper.

In this way the life of love is hidden, but its hidden life is itself in motion and has the eternal in itself. As the still waters, however quietly they lie, are really running water, for is not the well-spring at the bottom: so love flows, however still it is in its hiddenness. But the still waters can dry up if the springs stop; the life of love, on the other hand, has an eternal spring. This life is fresh and everlasting. No cold can freeze it—it is too warm for that; and no heat can dry it up—it is too fresh in its own coolness for that. But hidden it is, and when the Gospel speaks about the recognisability of this life by its fruits, then the

meaning is above all not that one should disquiet and disturb this hiddenness or give himself over to observation or investigative introspection, something which only "grieves the spirit"<sup>6</sup> and retards growth.

Yet this hidden life of love is knowable by its fruits—yes, there is a need in love to be recognisable by its fruits. How beautiful it is—that what betokens the deepest poverty likewise signifies the greatest riches! Need, to have need, and to be needy—how reluctantly a man wishes this to be said of him! And yet we pay the highest compliment when we say of a poet—"It is a need for him to write," of an orator—"It is a need for him to speak," of a girl—"It is a need for her to love." Alas, even the most needy person who has ever lived—if he still has had love—how rich his life has been in comparison with him, the only really poor person, who lived out his life and never felt the need of anything! It is a girl's greatest riches that she needs the beloved. It is the religious man's highest and true wealth that he needs God. Ask them—ask the girl if she could be just as happy if she could dispense with her beloved; ask the religious man if he understands or desires that he could just as well dispense with God! It is the same with the recognisability of love by its fruits, which, for the very same reason, when the relationship is right, are said to press through out of need—an indication of abundance. It would be the greatest torture, if love really could contain such a self-contradiction, for love to require itself to keep hidden, to require its own unrecognisability. Would it not be as if a plant, sensitive to the vigour and blessing of life in itself, did not dare let it become known and kept the blessing to itself as if it were a curse—alas, as a secret in its inexplicable withering away. But this is not so at all. For even if a single, particular expression of love, a single impulse of the heart, were, out of love, forced back into painful concealment—this same life of love would find yet another expression for itself and would still become recognisable by its fruits. O you quiet martyrs of unhappy erotic love—to be sure it remained a secret that out of love you suffered in hiding love; it never became known, for so great was your love which brought this sacrifice—yet your love was known by its fruits! And perhaps those very fruits would be the most precious, those which were matured by the quiet fire of secret pain.

The tree is known by its fruits; to be sure, the tree is also known by its leaves, but the fruit is still its essential mark. If, therefore, one knew by the leaves that a tree was of a certain kind but in the fruit season found that it bore no fruit—then one would know that it really was

not the tree which according to the leaves it appeared to be. The recognisability of love is just like this. The apostle John says (I John 3: 18), "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth." How can we better compare this love in words and speech than with the leaves of the tree; for words and expressions and the inventions of speech can also be a mark of love, but they are uncertain. The same words in one person's mouth can be very significant and reliable, in another's mouth as the vague whisper of leaves; the same words in one man's mouth can be like "blessed nourishing grain," in another's like the unfruitful beauty of the leaves. Yet because of this one should not repress the words, any more than one should hide visible emotion when it is genuine, for this can be just as unkind a wrong as holding back from a man what is due him. Your friend, your beloved, your child, or whoever is the object of your love, has a claim upon its expression also in words when it really moves you inwardly. The emotion is not your possession but the other's. The expression of it is his due, since in the emotion you belong to him who moves you and makes you conscious of belonging to him. When the heart is full you should not grudgingly and loftily, short-changing the other, injure him by pressing your lips together in silence; you should let the mouth speak out of the abundance of the heart;<sup>7</sup> you should not be ashamed of your feelings and still less of honestly giving to each one his due.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, one should not love in word and with devices of speech, and neither should one regard them as sure marks of love. On the contrary, by such fruits or by their being merely leaves, one should know that love has not had time for growth. Sirach says in warning (6, 4), "Eat up your leaves, and you will lose your fruit and leave yourself standing like a dried-up tree";<sup>9</sup> for precisely by words and techniques of speech as the only fruit of love one knows that a man has ripped off the leaves out of season and thereby gets no fruit, not to speak of something more terrible, that occasionally one recognises the deceiver by his very own words and manner of speaking. Consequently, immature and deceitful love is known by the fact that words and techniques of speech are its only fruit.

It is said of certain plants that they must form hearts; the same must be said of a man's love: if it is really to bear fruit and consequently be recognisable by its fruit, it must form a heart. Love, to be sure, proceeds from the heart, but let us not in our haste about this forget the eternal truth that love forms the heart.<sup>10</sup> Every man experiences the transient excitements of an inconstant heart, but to

have a heart in this natural sense is infinitely different from forming a heart in the eternal sense. How rarely the eternal gets enough control over a man so that the love establishes itself in him eternally or forms his heart. Yet it is the essential condition for bearing love's own fruit by which it is known. As love itself is not to be seen (for that reason must one believe in it), neither is it unconditionally and directly to be known by any one expression.—There is no word in human language, not a single one, not the most sacred word, of which we could say: when a man uses this word, it is unconditionally proved thereby that there is love in him. Rather, it is true that a word from one person can convince us that there is love in him and the opposite word from another can convince that there is love in him also. It is true that one and the same word can convince us that love dwells in the person who uttered it and not in another who nevertheless uttered the same word.—There is no deed, not a single one, not even the best, of which we dare to say unconditionally: he who does this thereby unconditionally demonstrates love. It depends upon *how* the deed is done. There are, indeed, acts which in a special sense are called works of love. But, in truth, because one makes charitable contributions, because he visits the widow and clothes the naked—his love is not necessarily demonstrated or made recognisable by such deeds, for one can perform works of love in an unloving, yes, even in a self-loving way, and when this is so, the works of love are nevertheless not the work of love. You certainly have seen this sad state of affairs often enough. Perhaps you have sometimes also caught yourself in it, something every honest man will confess about himself, simply because he is not unkind and callous enough to overlook what is essential, in preoccupation with *what* he does to forget *how* he does it. Alas, Luther is supposed to have said that not once in his life had he prayed entirely undisturbed by any distracting thoughts. In the same way the honest man confesses that never, however often and however many times he willingly and gladly has given charity, that never has he done it except in frailty, perhaps confused by an accidental impression, perhaps in capricious partiality, perhaps to save face, perhaps with averted glance (but not in the Biblical sense),<sup>11</sup> perhaps without the left hand's knowing about it (yet in thoughtlessness), perhaps thinking about his own troubles (instead of thinking about the troubles of the poor), perhaps seeking alleviation by giving charity (instead of wanting to alleviate the need)—in such ways the works of love would not in the highest sense become a work of love.—Consequently, how the word is said and, above all, how it is meant,

consequently, how the deed is done: this is the decisive factor in determining and recognising love by its fruits. But here again it holds true that there is nothing, no *in such a way*, of which it can unconditionally be said that it unconditionally proves the presence of love or that it unconditionally proves there is no love.

Nevertheless, it remains fixed and firm that love shall be known by its fruits. But the holy words of our text are not spoken to encourage us to get busy judging one another; they are rather spoken warningly to the individual, to you, my reader, and to me, to encourage each one not to let his love become unfruitful but to work so that it is capable of being recognised by its fruits, whether these are recognised by others or not. For one is not to work in order that love becomes known by its fruits but to work to make love capable of being recognised by its fruits. In this endeavour one must watch himself so that this, the recognition of love, does not become more important to him than the one important thing: that it has fruits and therefore can be known. The prudent counsel one can give to a man, the circumspection one can recommend to prevent being deceived by others—this is one thing; another and far more important thing is the gospel's summons to the individual to consider that the tree is known by its fruits and that it is he or his love which in the gospel is compared to the tree. It does not say in the gospel—as shrewd talk would have it—"You or anyone shall know the tree by its fruits," but it says, "The tree shall be known by its fruits." The interpretation is that you, you who read the words of the gospel, you are the tree. What the prophet Nathan<sup>12</sup> added to the parable, "You are the man," the gospel needs not add, since it is already contained in the form of the statement and in its being a word of the gospel. For the divine authority of the Gospel speaks not to one man about another man, not to you, the reader, about me, or to me about you—no, when the gospel speaks it speaks to the single individual. It does not speak *about* us men, you and me, but it speaks *to* us men, you and me, and it speaks *about* the requirement that love shall be known by its fruits.

Therefore, if any overexcited and enthusiastic or hypocritical person were to teach that love is such a hidden feeling that it is above bearing fruit or such a hidden feeling that the fruits proved nothing for or against, yes, even that poisonous fruits proved nothing—then we should remember the words of the gospel, "The tree shall be known by its fruits." We shall, not in order to attack but to defend ourselves against such persons, remember that what is true of every word of the gospel



is true here, that "He who acts according to my teachings is like a man who builds upon a rock."<sup>13</sup> "When the heavy rains come" and destroy the proud frailty of sensitive love, "when the storm blows and snags" the web of hypocrisy—then shall true love be known by its fruits. In truth, love shall be recognisable by its fruits, but still it does not follow from this that you are to take it upon yourself to be the man who knows. Furthermore, the tree shall be recognisable by its fruits, but it does not follow from this that there is one tree which shall take it upon itself to judge the others; on the contrary, it is always the individual tree which ought—to bear fruit. A man ought not to be afraid either of him who can slay the body<sup>14</sup> or of the hypocrite. There is only one whom a human being should fear—that is God; and there is only one a man should be afraid of—that is himself. Truly, he who in fear and trembling towards God has been afraid of himself has never been deceived by a hypocrite. But he who gets busy tracking down hypocrites, whether he succeeds or not, should be certain that this also is not hypocrisy, for such investigations are hardly the fruits of love. He, on the other hand, whose love really bears its *own* fruit will, without wishing it and without trying, unmask or even shame every hypocrite who comes near him; but one who loves will perhaps not even be conscious of all this. The most mediocre defence against hypocrisy is prudence; well, it is hardly a defence, rather a dangerous neighbour of hypocrisy. The best defence against hypocrisy is love; yes, it is not only a defence but a yawning abyss; in all eternity it has nothing to do with hypocrisy. This also is a fruit whereby love is known—it secures the lover against falling into the snare of the hypocrite.

But now even if it is true that love is recognisable by its fruits, let us not, for all that, impatiently, suspiciously, judgingly demand continually and perpetually to see the fruits in the relationship of love with one another. The first emphasis developed in these reflections was that one must believe in love; otherwise one will never become aware that it exists. But now we return again to the first point and say, repeating: believe in love! This is the first and last thing to be said about love if one is to know what love is. At first it was said in contrast to the presumptuous practicality which wants to deny the existence of love; now, however, after the recognisability of love by its fruits has been developed, it is said in opposition to the morbid, anxious, shrewd mean-heartedness which in petty, miserable mistrust insists upon seeing the fruits. Do not forget that it would be a beautiful, a noble, a holy fruit by which love in you would become known if in relation to another

person, whose life perhaps bears poorer fruit, you were loving enough to see it as more beautiful than it is. If mistrust can see something as less than it actually is, love also can see something as greater than it is—Do not forget that even when you are happy over the fruits of love, when by them you know that love dwells in this other person, do not forget that it is still more blessed to believe in love. Precisely this is a new expression for the depth of love—that when one has learned to know it by its fruits, one again returns to the beginning—to believe in love—and returns to it as the highest. For indeed the life of love is recognisable by its fruits, which make it manifest, but the life itself is still more than the single fruit and more than all the fruits which one could enumerate at any moment. Therefore the last, the most blessed, the absolutely convincing evidence of love remains: love itself, which is known and recognised by the love in another. Like is known only by like. Only he who abides in love can recognise love, and in the same way his love is to be known.

## II A

### You Shall Love

"And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself." *Matthew 22:39*

Every discourse, especially the opening portion, usually postulates something from which it then proceeds. One who wishes to deliberate on a discourse or assertion does well to find first this presupposition in order that he may begin with it. Our quoted text also contains a presupposition which comes at the end, to be sure, but it is nevertheless the beginning. When it is said: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," therein is contained what is presupposed, that every man loves himself. Christianity, which by no means begins, as do certain high-flying thinkers,<sup>15</sup> without presuppositions—nor with a flattering presupposition, either!—therefore makes this postulate. Indeed, do we dare deny what Christianity presupposes? But on the other hand, is it possible for anyone to misunderstand Christianity, as if it were its intention to teach what worldly cleverness unanimously, alas, and yet contentiously, teaches, "that everyone is closest to himself"—is it possible for anyone to misunderstand this, as if it were the intention of Christianity to proclaim self-love as a prescriptive right? On the contrary, it is its purpose to wrest self-love away from us human beings. This implies loving one's self; but if one must love his neighbour *as himself*, then the command, like a pick, wrenches open the lock of self-love and thereby wrests it away from a man. If the command to love one's neighbour were expressed in a way different from this little phrase *as yourself*, which is so easy to wield and yet at the same time has the tension of the eternal, then the command would not be able to master self-love in this way. This *as yourself* does not waver in

its aim, and with the firmness of the eternal it critically penetrates to the innermost hiding place where a man loves himself; it does not leave self-love the slightest excuse or the tiniest escape-hatch. How remarkable! There could be lengthy and discerning addresses on how a man ought to love his neighbour; and when the addresses were over, self-love would still be able to hit upon excuses and find ways out, because the subject had not been entirely exhausted, all circumstances had not been taken into account, because continually something had been forgotten, or something had not been accurately or bindingly enough expressed and described. But this *as yourself*—yes, no wrestler can wrap himself around his opponent as this command wraps itself about self-love, which cannot move from the spot. Truly, when self-love has struggled with this phrase, which nevertheless is so easy to understand that no one needs to rack his brain over it, then will it realise that it has struggled with one that is stronger. As Jacob limped<sup>16</sup> after having struggled with God, so shall self-love be broken if it has struggled with this phrase, which nevertheless does not seek to teach a man not to love himself but in fact rather seeks to teach him proper self-love. How remarkable! What struggle is so protracted, so terrifying, so involved as self-love's war to defend itself, and yet Christianity decides it all with one single blow. The whole thing is as quick as a turn of the hand; every thing is decided, like the eternal decision of resurrection, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." (I Corinthians 15:52). Christianity presupposes that men love themselves and adds to this only the phrase about neighbours *as yourself*. And yet there is the difference of the eternal between the first and the last.

But, after all, should this be the highest? Should it not be possible to love a person *more than oneself*? Indeed, this sort of talk, born of poetic enthusiasm, is heard in the world. Could it then be true, perhaps, that Christianity is not capable of soaring so high, and therefore (presumably because it directs itself to simple, every-day men) it is left standing wretchedly with the demand to love one's neighbours *as oneself*, just as it sets the apparently very unpoetic neighbour<sup>17</sup> as the object of love instead of a lover, a friend, the celebrated objects of lofty love (for certainly no poet has sung of love to one's neighbour any more than of loving *as oneself*)—could this perhaps be so? Or should we, since we nevertheless make a concession to this *celebrated* love in comparison with this *commanded* love, look upon Christianity's interpretation and understanding of life as inferior because it more soberly and steadily holds itself down to earth, perhaps in the same sense as the



commonplace: "Love me little, love me long"? Far from it. Christianity knows far better than any poet what love is and what it is to love. For this very reason it also knows what perhaps escapes the poet, that the love they celebrate is secretly self-love and in this very way their intoxicated expression—to love another man more than oneself—can be explained. Erotic love is still not the eternal; it is the beautiful giddiness of infinity; its highest expression is the rashness of riddles. Out of this comes its attempting an even more dizzy expression—"to love a human being more than God." This rashness pleases the poet beyond measure; it is sweet music in his ears; it inspires him to song. Alas, Christianity teaches that this is mockery of God.—The same holds true of friendship as of erotic love, insofar as this also is based on favouritism: to love this single human being above all others, to love him in distinction from all others. The object of both erotic love and friendship has therefore also the favourite's name, *the beloved*, *the friend*, who is loved in distinction from the rest of the world. On the other hand, the Christian teaching is to love one's neighbour, to love all mankind, all men, even enemies, and not to make exceptions, neither in favouritism nor in aversion.

There is only one whom a man can with the truth of the eternal love above himself—that is God. Therefore it is not said: "Thou shalt love God as thyself," but rather, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and all thy mind." A man should love God in unconditional *obedience* and love him in *adoration*. It would be ungodliness if any man dared love himself in this way, or dared love another person in this way, or dared to let another person love him in this way. If your beloved or friend asked something of you which out of honest love and in concern you had decided was harmful to him, then you must take the responsibility if you express love by complying instead of expressing love by denying the fulfillment of the desire. But God you are to love in unconditional obedience, even if what he demands of you may seem to you to be to your own harm—yes, harmful to his cause. For the wisdom of God is not to be compared with yours, and God's governance is not, in duty bound, answerable to your prudence. All you have to do is to obey in love. A human being, on the other hand, you ought only—yet, no, this is indeed the highest—therefore a human being you ought to love as you love yourself. If you can perceive what is best for him better than he himself, you shall not be excused because the harmful thing was his own desire, what he himself asked for. If this were not the case, then

there could quite properly be talk about loving another person more than one's self, for this would mean—in spite of one's own insight that it was harmful to him—doing it *in compliance* because he asked for it or *in adoration* because he desired it. But you have no right to do this; you bear the responsibility if you do it, just as the other bears the responsibility if he in the same way should misuse his relationship to you.

Therefore—as *yourself*. Suppose the most cunning deceiver who has ever lived (or we could imagine him as more cunning than anyone who has ever lived), in order, if possible, to have the opportunity of using many words and becoming loquacious (for then the deceiver would quickly conquer), were temptingly to question the *royal law*<sup>18</sup> year in and year out, "How shall I love my neighbour?": then the terse command, unchanged, will continue to repeat the short phrase, "as yourself." And if any deceiver has—deceived himself throughout his whole life by all sorts of verbosity concerning this subject, the eternal will only hold him to the terse word of the law, *as yourself*. No one, to be sure, will be able to escape this command. If its *as yourself* comes as close to the life of self-love as is possible, then *one's neighbour* is again a qualification as fatally close to self-love as possible. Self-love itself perceives that it is an impossibility to shirk this. The only escape is the one which the Pharisees in their time also tried in order to justify themselves: to let it be doubtful who one's neighbour is—in order to get him out of one's life.

Who, then, is *one's neighbour*? The word is clearly derived from *neahgebur* [near-dweller]; consequently your neighbour is he who dwells nearer than anyone else, yet not in the sense of partiality, for to love him who through favouritism is nearer to you than all others is self-love—"Do not the heathens also do the same?"<sup>19</sup> Your neighbour, then, is nearer to you than all others. But is he also nearer to you than you are to yourself? No, that he is not, but he is just as near or ought to be just as near to you as you are to yourself. The concept of *neighbour* really means a duplicating of one's own self. *Neighbour* is what philosophers would call the *other*, that by which the selfishness in self-love is to be tested. As far as thought is concerned the *neighbour* or *other* need not even exist. If a man living on a desert island formed his mind according to the command, he could by forsaking self-love be said to love his neighbour. To be sure, *neighbour* in itself is manifold, for *neighbour* means *all men*; and yet in another sense one person is enough in order that you may practise the law. In a selfish sense it is impossible

in being a self consciously to be two. In this self-love must be alone. Nor are three needed, for if there are two, it means that there is another person whom you in a Christian sense love *as yourself* or in whom you love your *neighbour* so that you thereby love all men. But what selfishness absolutely cannot endure is duplication, and the words of the command *as yourself* are simply duplication. The ardent lover can by no means, either by reason of or in the power of his ardour, endure duplication, which here would mean giving up his erotic love if the beloved required it. The lover therefore does not love the beloved *as himself*, for he makes demands, but this *as yourself* makes the demand rather on him—alas, and yet the lover still thinks he loves the other person more than himself.

In this way *one's neighbour* is as close to the life of self-love as possible. If there are only two people, the other person is the neighbour. If there are millions, everyone of these is one's neighbour, that is, again, one who is closer than *the friend* and *the beloved*, inasmuch as these, as objects of partiality, lie so close to one's self-love. Of the fact that one's neighbour exists in this way and is so near one is usually conscious only when one wants justice done in relationship to him, when one thinks he can get something out of him. If anyone with this view asks, "Who is my neighbour?" then Christ's reply to the Pharisee contains the answer only in singular way, for in the answer the question is first turned around to mean essentially: in what manner is one to ask the question? After having told the parable of the merciful Samaritan (Luke 10 : 36), Christ says to the Pharisee, "Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?" The Pharisee answers *correctly*, "The one who showed mercy on him." This means that by recognising your duty you easily discover who your neighbour is. The Pharisee's answer is contained in Christ's question, which by its form necessitated the Pharisee's answering in this way. He towards whom I have a duty is my neighbour, and when I fulfill my duty I prove that I am a neighbour. Christ does not speak about recognising one's neighbour but about being a neighbour oneself, about proving oneself to be a neighbour, something the Samaritan showed by his compassion. By this he did not prove that the assaulted man was his neighbour but that he was a neighbour of the one assaulted. The Levite and the priest were in a stricter sense neighbours of the assaulted man, but they wished to ignore it. On the other hand, the Samaritan, who because of prejudice was predestined to misunderstanding, nevertheless understood rightly that he was a neighbour of

the assaulted man. Choosing a lover, finding a friend, yes, that is a long, hard job, but one's neighbour is easy to recognise, easy to find—if one himself will only recognise his duty.

The command reads thus, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," but if the command is properly understood, it also says the opposite: "*You shall love yourself in the right way.*" If anyone, therefore, refuses to learn from Christianity how to love himself in the right way, he cannot love his neighbour either. He can perhaps cling to one or more men "through thick and thin," as it is called, but this is, by no means, loving one's neighbour. To love oneself in the right way and to love one's neighbour correspond perfectly to one another; fundamentally they are one and the same thing. When the law's *as yourself* has wrested from you the self-love which Christianity sadly enough must presuppose to be in every man, then and then only have you learned how to love yourself. The law is, therefore: you shall love yourself in the same way as you love your neighbour when you love him as yourself. Whoever has any knowledge of men will certainly admit that whenever he has desired the capacity of moving others to relinquish self-love, he has also frequently been constrained to wish that it were possible to teach them to love themselves. When the activist wastes his time and powers in the service of vain, inconsequential accomplishments, is it not because he has not rightly learned how to love himself? When the frivolous person throws himself, almost like a nonentity, into the folly of the moment, is it not because he does not understand how to love himself rightly? When the melancholic dejectedly desires to be rid of life, of himself, is this not because he will not learn earnestly and rigorously to love himself? When a man surrenders himself to despair because the world or some person has left him faithlessly betrayed, what then is his fault (his innocent suffering is not referred to here) except that he does not love himself in the right way? When a man in self-torment thinks to do God a service by martyring himself, what is his sin except not willing to love himself in the right way? Alas, and when a man presumptuously lays violent hands on himself, is not his sin just this that he does not rightly love himself in genuine understanding of how a man *ought* to love himself? There is a lot of talk in the world about treachery and faithlessness—and, God help us, it is all too true—but still let us never because of this forget that every man has in himself the most dangerous traitor of all. This treachery, whether it consists in selfishly loving oneself or in selfishly not willing to love oneself in the right way—this

treachery is certainly concealed. No outcry goes up about it such as otherwise goes up in cases of treachery and faithlessness. But is it not therefore all the more important that the teaching of Christianity should be brought to mind again and again, the teaching that a man should love his neighbour as himself, that is, as he ought to love himself.

The command of love to one's neighbour therefore speaks in one and the same phrase, *as yourself*, about this neighbour-love and about love to oneself. And now the introduction to this discourse ends with what it desires to make the object of consideration: the commands of love to one's neighbour and of love to oneself become synonymous not only through this *as yourself* but still more through the phrase "you shall." Of this we shall speak:

YOU shall LOVE,

for the very mark of Christian love and its distinguishing characteristic is this, that it contains the apparent contradiction: to love is duty.

You shall love—this, then, is the word of the *royal law*. And truly, my reader, if you are capable of forming a conception of the conditions in the world before these words were spoken, or if you strive to understand yourself and give heed to the lives and dispositions of those who, although they call themselves Christians, really live within pagan concepts—then in relation to this Christian imperative, as in relation to everything Christian, you will humbly confess with the wonder of faith that such a command did not spring up in any human heart. Now after it has been commanded throughout Christianity's eighteen centuries and previously in Judaism; now when everyone is instructed in this and, spiritually understood, is like someone brought up in his parents' comfortable house and almost made to forget that daily bread is a gift; now when by those brought up in it Christianity is slighted in favour of all kinds of novelties, as when good food is slighted in favour of confections by someone who has never been hungry; now when Christianity is presupposed, presupposed as known by all, as given, and is alluded to—in order to proceed further—now this law of love is repeated by everyone as a matter of course, and yet how seldom, perhaps, is it observed! How seldom, perhaps, does a Christian earnestly and gratefully ponder with comprehension what his condition would have been if Christianity had not come into the world! What courage it takes to say for the first time, "You shall love," or, more

correctly, what divine authority it takes to turn natural man's conceptions and ideas upside-down with this phrase! For there at the boundary where human speech halts and courage forsakes one, there revelation breaks forth with divine creativeness and proclaims what is not difficult to understand in the sense of profundity or human parallels, but which still did not rise up in any human heart. It really is not difficult to understand, provided it has been expressed; indeed, it wants only to be understood in order to be practised—but it did not arise in any man's heart. Take a pagan who is not spoiled by having learned thoughtlessly to patter out Christianity by rote or is not spoiled by imagining himself to be a Christian—and this command "You shall love" will not only surprise him but will disturb him and be an offence to him. For this very reason that which is the mark of Christianity—"All things are made new"<sup>20</sup>—also fits this command of love. The command is not something new in an accidental sense, nor a novelty in the sense of something curious, nor some new something in the temporal sense. Love had also existed in paganism; but this obligation to love is an alteration by the eternal—and all things are made new. What a difference there is between the interplay of the powers of feelings, of urges, of inclinations, and of passions, in short, the interplay of the powers of the spontaneous life, the artistically celebrated glory of the immediate life in smiles or in tears, in desires or in wants, what a difference there is between this and the earnestness of the eternal, the earnestness of the command in spirit and in truth, in uprightness and self-renunciation!

But human ungratefulness—what else has such a short memory! Because the highest good is now offered to everyone, men take it as nothing, discern nothing in it, to say nothing of becoming personally aware of its extraordinary quality, just as if the highest good had lost something because every man has or may have the same.—If a family possesses some costly treasure of historical significance, generation after generation the parents tell the children, and the children their children again, how it all happened. Because Christianity for so many centuries now has become the possession of the whole generation, shall all telling of the eternal change which takes place in the world through Christianity therefore cease? Is not every generation just as close, that is, just as duty-bound to make this clear to itself? Is the change less significant because it is now eighteen centuries later? Has it also become less significant that there is a God because for many centuries there have lived generations who believed on him? Has it therefore become less

significant for me—whether or not I believe? And for one who lives in our time, eighteen centuries later, is it less significant to become a Christian just because it is eighteen centuries since Christianity entered the world? And if it is not so very long ago since one became a Christian, he must certainly be able to remember what he was like before he became a Christian and consequently know what a change has taken place in him—if the change of becoming a Christian has taken place in him. Therefore there is no need of a world-historical exposition of paganism as if it were eighteen centuries since the fall of paganism; for it is not so very long since both you, reader, and I were pagans, were pagans—that is, if we have become Christians at all.

This is the most tragic and ungodly kind of deception, through ingratitude to allow oneself to be cheated out of the highest, which one thinks he possesses, but which, alas, one really does not possess at all. For what is the highest possession, the possession of everything, if I never get a genuine awareness of possessing it and of what it is that I possess!<sup>21</sup> According to the Bible, he who has earthly goods shall be like him who does not have them. I wonder if this is true also in relationship to the highest—to have it and still be like him who does not have it. I wonder if it holds true—but, no, let us not trick anyone with this question, as if it were *possible* to have the highest in this way; let us rightly consider that it is an impossibility. Worldly goods are inconsequential things and therefore Scripture teaches that they, when one possesses them, shall be possessed as inconsequential things; but the highest neither *can* nor should be possessed as something inconsequential. Worldly goods are in an external sense actualities; therefore one can possess them, although at the same time he is as one who does not possess them. But the goods of the spirit are only in inwardness, exist only *as possessed*, and therefore one cannot, if one really possesses them, be as one who does not possess them. On the contrary, if one is such a person, he does not possess them at all. If anyone thinks he has faith and yet is indifferent towards this possession, is neither cold nor hot, he can be certain that he does not have faith. If anyone thinks he is Christian and yet is indifferent towards his being a Christian, then he really is not one at all. What would we think of a man who affirmed that he was in love and also that it was a matter of indifference to him?

Therefore when we talk about Christianity, let us not, now or at any time, forget its primal character—namely, that it did not originate

in any human heart.<sup>22</sup> Let us not forget to speak about it with that originality of faith which, if a man has it, does not believe because others have believed but because this man has been seized by that which has seized countless men before him, yet not thereby in a less original way! A tool which a craftsman uses becomes dull through the years, and a spring loses its tension and becomes weak, but that which has the tension of the eternal retains it totally unchanged throughout all time. When a strength-tester has been used for a long time, even the weak can eventually meet the test; but the eternal's standard of strength—whether or not a man has faith—a standard by which every man shall be tested, remains totally unchanged through all ages.—When Christ says (Matthew 10:17), "Beware of men," I wonder if this is not also meant: Beware of men, lest by men—that is, by everlasting comparison with other men, by customs and externals—you let yourself be tricked out of the highest good. For the chicaneries of a betrayer are not very dangerous, since one is the more readily alerted to them; but this, to have the highest good in a sort of indifferent fellowship, in the indolence of habit, yes, in the indolence of a habit which even sets up the generation in place of the individual, making the generation the recipient and the individual a sharer automatically on the strength of this—this is a terrible thing. Certainly the highest good shall not be booty; you shall not selfishly have it for yourself, for what you can have only for yourself alone is never the highest good. But even if in the deepest sense you have the highest good in common with everyone (and precisely this is the highest; this you can have in common with all), you shall, believing, nevertheless have it for yourself so that you keep it while everyone else, perhaps, also keeps it—but, in addition, even though everyone else gave it up! Guard yourself against men also in this way: "Be shrewd as serpents" in order to preserve the secret of faith for yourself, even though you hope and desire and work that every one may do as you do; "Be innocent as doves,"<sup>23</sup> for faith is this very simplicity. You shall not use ingenuity in order to make faith into something else, but, wise among men, you shall use ingenuity in order to protect the secret of faith in you, guarding yourself against men. Is a password no secret just because everyone knows it, individually, because it is confided to everyone and preserved by everyone as a secret? The secret of a password, however, is one thing to-day and another to-morrow. But the essence of faith is to be a secret, to be for the single individual; if it is not preserved as a secret by each individual, even when he professes it, he believes not at all.

Is there perhaps something lacking in faith since in this way it is and continues to be and ought to be a secret? Is this not also the case with erotic love, is it not rather the transient emotions which become manifest immediately and dwindle away and the deep impression which always maintains secrecy, so that we even say, and rightly so, that the falling in love which does not make a man secretive is not real falling in love? Secret falling in love can be an image of faith; but the hidden man's imperishable inwardness in faith is life itself. He who shrewd as a serpent guards himself against men in order that, simple as a dove, he may preserve the secret of faith, he also has, as the Scriptures say (Mark 9 : 50) "salt in himself"; but if he does not guard himself against men, the salt loses its strength and wherewith shall it then be salted? Even if it does happen that the secrecy of erotic love becomes a man's downfall, faith is eternal and is always the saving secret! Consider, for example, the woman with hæmorrhages:<sup>24</sup> she did not push herself forward in order to touch Christ's robe; she told no one else what she had in mind and what she believed—she said very softly to herself, "If I only touch the hem of his robe I shall be healed." The secret she kept to herself; it was the secret of faith which saved her both for time and eternity. This secret you can have for yourself also when you forthrightly profess the faith, and when you lie weak on your sick-bed and cannot move a limb, when you cannot even move your tongue, you can still have this secret within you.

The primal character of faith is related to the originality of Christianity. Lengthy descriptions of paganism, its errors, its distinctive characteristics, are not at all necessary; the marks of Christianity are contained in Christianity itself. Make a test: forget Christianity for a moment and think of what you ordinarily know as love; call to mind what you read in the poets, what you yourself can find out, and then see if it ever has occurred to you to think this: you *shall* love. Be honest—but lest this disturb you, I will honestly admit that many, many times in my life I have been startled in wonder over the fact that love thereby at times seemed to lose everything, even though it gains everything. Be honest, admit that to most people, perhaps, the poets' glowing descriptions of erotic love, of friendship, seem far higher than this poor: "You *shall* love."

"You shall love." *Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love eternally secured against every change, eternally made free in blessed independence, eternally and happily secured against despair.*

However joyous, however happy, however indescribably confident

instinctive and inclinational love, spontaneous love, can be in itself, it still feels precisely in its most beautiful moment the need to establish itself, if possible, more securely. Therefore the two pledge; they pledge fidelity or friendship to one another. And when we talk most solemnly we do not say of the two: "They love one another"; we say "They pledged fidelity" or "They pledged friendship to one another." By what, then, do they swear this love? We shall not confuse the issue and be distracted by calling to mind the great variety of invocations used by the poets, the spokesmen of this love—for in relation to erotic love it is the poet who makes the two promise, the poet who joins the two, the poet who prophesies an Eden for the two and lets them swear—in short, the poet is the priest. Does this love swear, then, by something which is higher than itself? No, this it does not do. Precisely this is the beautiful, touching, enigmatic, poetic misunderstanding—that the two do not themselves discover it, and for this very reason the poet is their sole beloved confidant, because he does not discover it either. When erotic love swears fidelity, it really gives to itself the significance by which it swears; it is love itself which casts the lustre over that by which it swears. Therefore it not only does not swear by something higher but really swears by something which is less than itself. This love is indescribably rich in its own loving misunderstanding; just because it is itself an infinite richness, an unlimited certainty, when it wishes to swear it swears by something poor but does not itself realise this. The result is that this swearing, which should be and honestly thinks itself to be the highest seriousness, is nevertheless a most beguiling jest. And this mysterious friend, the poet, who as the closest confidant has the best understanding of this love, does not understand it either. Yet it is easy to understand that if one is really to swear, he must swear by something higher; then God in heaven is the only one who is truly in a position to swear by himself. But the poet cannot understand this—that is, the individual who is a poet can well understand it, but insofar as he is a poet he cannot understand it, inasmuch as the *poet* cannot understand it; for the poet understands everything, in riddles, and marvellously explains everything, in riddles, but he cannot understand himself, or understand that he himself is a riddle. If he were compelled to understand this, he would, if he did not become indignant and embittered, sadly say: would that this understanding had not been forced on me—it disturbs what is most beautiful to me, it disturbs my life, and yet I can make no use of it. Thus far the poet is right in the matter, for true understanding means the decisive settlement



of the life-problems of his existence. There are, then, two riddles: the first is the love of the two persons, and the second is the poet's explanation of it, or that the poet's explanation is also a riddle.

In such a way erotic love swears, and then the two add an Eden—they will love each other "for ever." If this is not added, the poet will not join the two; he turns away, indifferent, from such time-bound love, or mocking he turns against it, since he belongs eternally to this eternal love. There are, then, really two unions, first of the two who will love each other for ever, and then of the poet, who wants to belong to the two for ever. And the poet is right in this that when two persons will not love one another for ever, their love is not worth talking about, even less worthy of artistic celebration. But the poet does not detect the misunderstanding: that the two swear *by their love* to love each other for ever instead of swearing *by the eternal* their love to one another. The eternal is the higher. If one is to swear, then one must swear by the higher; but if one swears by the eternal, then one swears by duty—that "one *shall* love." Alas, but this favourite of the lovers, the poet, he who is even rarer than the real lovers whom his longing seeks, he who himself is love's marvel, he is also like the delicate child—he cannot endure this *shall* and as soon as it is mentioned he either becomes impatient or he begins to weep.

Therefore this spontaneous love has, according to the beautiful understanding of the imagination, the eternal in itself, but it is not consciously grounded upon the eternal and consequently can be *changed*. Even if it does not change, it still can be changed, for it is indeed happiness or good fortune, but what is true of fortune is true of happiness, which, if one thinks of the eternal, cannot be thought of without sadness, just as it is said with a shudder: "Happiness is when it has been."<sup>25</sup> That is to say, as long as it lasted or was in existence change was possible; only after it is gone can one say that it lasted. "Count no man happy while he is living." As long as he is living his happiness can change; only when he is dead and happiness had not left him while he lived, only then is it certain that he was happy. That which merely exists, having undergone no change, is continually confronted by the possibility of change; change may occur at any time; even in the last moment it can happen, and only when life has come to an end can one say: change did not take place—or perhaps it did. Whatever has undergone no change certainly has *continuance*, but it does not have *continuity*; insofar as it has continuance, it exists, but insofar as it has not won enduring continuity amid change, it

cannot become contemporaneous with itself and is either happily unconscious of this misalignment or is disposed to sorrow. Only the eternal can be and become and remain contemporaneous with every age; temporality, on the other hand, divides within itself, and the present cannot become contemporary with the future, or the future with the past, or the past with the present. Of that which has won continuity in undergoing change, one can not only say when it has existed, "It existed," but one can say, "It had continuity throughout its existence." Just this is the safeguard, and the relationship is entirely different from that of happiness or good fortune. When love has undergone the transformation of the eternal by being made duty, it has won continuity, and then it follows of itself that it survives. It is not self-evident that what exists in this moment will exist in the next moment, but it is self-evident that the continuous survives. We say that something survives the test, and we praise it when it has survived the test; but this is said about the imperfect, for the survival of the continuous will not and cannot reveal itself by surviving a test—it is indeed the continuous—and only the transient can give itself the appearance of continuity by surviving a test. No one would think of saying that sterling silver [Prøve Sølv] must survive the test [Prøve] of time, for it is, after all, sterling silver. Thus it is also with regard to love. The love which simply exists, however fortunate, however blissful, however satisfying, however poetic it is, still must survive the test of the years. But the love which has undergone the transformation of the eternal by becoming duty has won continuity; it is sterling silver. Is such enduring love perhaps less useful, less applicable in life? Is, then, sterling silver less useful? Indeed not. Speech, involuntarily, and thought, consciously, honour sterling silver in a characteristic way merely by saying, "One uses it." There is no talk at all about testing; one does not insult it by wishing to test it; one knows in advance that sterling silver endures. Therefore when one uses a less reliable alloy, one is compelled to be more scrupulous and to speak less simply; one is compelled almost ambiguously to use double-talk and say, "One uses it, and while one uses it he also tests it," for it is always possible that it may undergo a change.

Consequently, *only when it is a duty to love, only then is love eternally secure*. This security of the eternal casts out all anxiety and makes the love perfect, perfectly secure. For in that love which has only existence, however confident it may be, there is still an anxiety, anxiety over the possibility of change. Such love does not itself understand any more



than the poet that this is anxiety, for the anxiety is hidden; the only expression is a burning passion, whereby is merely hinted that anxiety is hidden at the bottom. Otherwise why is it that spontaneous love is so inclined to—yes, so in love with—making a test of the love? This is just because love has not, by becoming a duty, in the deepest sense undergone *the test*. From this comes what the poet would call sweet unrest, which more and more foolhardily wants to make the test. The lover wants to test the beloved. The friend wants to test the friend. Testing certainly has its basis in love, but this violently flaming desire to test and this hankering desire to be put to the test explain that the love itself is unconsciously uncertain. Here again is an enigmatic misunderstanding in this spontaneous love and in the poet's explanation. The lovers and the poet think that this urge to test love is precisely an expression of how certain it is. But is this really so? It is quite right that one does not care to test what is unimportant to him; but from this it certainly does not follow that wanting to test the beloved is an expression of certainty. The two love one another; they love one another for all eternity; they are so certain—that they put it to a test. Is this the highest certainty? Is not this relationship just like that of love's swearing and swearing again by what is lower than love? In this way the lovers' highest expression for the constancy of their love is an expression of its merely existing; and one tests that which merely has existence, one puts it to the test. But when it is a duty to love, neither is a test needed nor the insulting foolhardiness of wanting to test, because if love is higher than every test it has already more than passed the test in the same sense that faith "more than conquers."<sup>26</sup> Testing is always related to possibility; there is always the possibility that what is being tested will not pass the test. Therefore if one would test whether he has faith or would try to get faith, it really means he will prevent himself from getting faith; he will bring himself into the unrest of covetousness where faith is never won, for "You *shall* believe." If a believer were to ask God to put his faith to a test, this would not be an expression of the believer's having faith in an extraordinarily high degree (to think this is a poetic misunderstanding, as it is also a misunderstanding to have faith in an *extraordinary* degree, since the ordinary degree is the highest), but it would be an expression of his having no faith at all, for "You *shall* believe." Never has any greater security been found and never shall the peace of the eternal be found in anything other than in this "You *shall*." The idea of testing, however congenial it may be, is an unquiet thought, and it is the disquietude

which makes one fancy that this is a higher proof. For testing is in itself inventive and is not to be exhausted any more than human knowledge has ever been able to calculate all the contingencies; on the other hand, as the earnest one says so well, "Faith has encompassed all contingencies." When one *shall*, it is for ever decided; and when you will understand that you *shall* love, your love is for ever secure.

By this "You shall" love is also for ever secured *against every change*. For that love which has only existence can be changed; it can be changed *within itself*, and it can be changed *into something else*.

Spontaneous love can be changed within itself; it can be changed to its opposite, to *hate*. Hate is a love which has become its opposite, a ruined love. Deep down love is continually aflame, but it is the flame of hate. When love is first burned out, the flame of hate is also put out for the first time. Just as we say of the tongue, that "It is the same tongue with which we bless and curse,"<sup>27</sup> so may one also say that it is the same love which loves and hates. But just because it is the same love, just for that reason it is not in the eternal sense the true love which *unchanged remains the same*; rather, this spontaneous love is fundamentally *the same* even when *changed*. True love, which has undergone the transformation of the eternal by becoming duty, is never changed, it has integrity; it loves—and never hates; it never hates the beloved. It might seem as if this spontaneous love were the stronger because it can do both, because it can *both* love and hate; it might seem as if it had an entirely different power over its object when it says, "If you will not love me, I will hate you"—but this is only an illusion. Even if changeableness is indeed a stronger power than unchangeableness, then who is stronger, he who says, "If you do not love me, I will hate you," or he who says, "If you hate me, I will still continue to love you?" Certainly it is terrifying and terrible when love is changed into hate, but for whom is it really terrible? I wonder if it is not most terrible for the one concerned, the one within whom love has turned to hate!

Spontaneous love can be changed within itself; by spontaneous combustion it can become *jealousy*; from the greatest happiness it can become the greatest torment. The heat of spontaneous love is so dangerous—no matter how great its passion is—so dangerous that this heat can easily become a fever. Spontaneity is, as it were, the fermenting element, so called because it has not yet undergone a change and therefore has not separated from itself the poison which engenders the

heat in the fermenting element. If love kindles itself with this poison instead of expelling it, jealousy appears—alas, as the word itself [*Iversyge*] says, it is a zealousness for becoming sick, a sickness from zealousness. The jealous man does not hate the object of love, far from it; but he tortures himself with the flame of requited love which with purifying power should cleanse his love. The jealous man picks up—almost like a beggar—every beam of love in the beloved, but through the burning glass of jealousy he focuses all these beams of love upon his own love, and he is slowly consumed. On the other hand, the love which has undergone the change of the eternal by becoming duty does not know jealousy; it does not merely love as it is loved—but it loves. Jealousy loves as it is loved. Anxiously tortured by thoughts as to whether it is being loved, it is just as jealous about its own love, about the possibility of its being disproportionate in relation to the other's indifference, as it is jealous of the manifestation of the other's love. Anxiously tortured by preoccupation with itself, it dares neither absolutely trust the beloved nor wholeheartedly surrender itself, lest it give too much and thereby continually burn itself as one burns himself on that which is not burning—except in the contact of anxiety. Spontaneous combustion is comparable. It would seem as if spontaneous love were an entirely different kind of fire since it can become jealousy. Alas, but this fire is a dreadful thing. It would seem as if jealousy might hold its object far more securely since it watches with a hundred eyes, and simple love can have only one eye, as it were, for its love. But I wonder if multiplicity is stronger than unity. I wonder if a heart torn asunder is stronger than a whole, undivided heart. I wonder if a continually anxious grasp holds its object more securely than the unified power of simplicity? How, then, is this simple love secured against jealousy? I wonder if it is not by avoiding comparisons in loving? It does not begin by spontaneously loving according to preference—it just loves. Therefore it can never reach the point of morbidly loving in accordance with comparisons—it just loves.

Spontaneous love can be changed *into something else*. It can be changed through the years—something seen often enough. Thus love loses its ardour, its joy, its desire, its originative power, its living freshness. As the river which sprang out of rocks disperses farther down in the sluggishness of the dead-waters, so is love exhausted in the lukewarmness and indifference of habit. Alas, of all the enemies habit is perhaps the most cunning, and it is cunning enough never to let itself

be seen, for he who sees the habit is saved from the habit. Habit is not like other enemies which one sees and against which one strives and defends himself. The struggle is really with oneself in order that one sees it. There is a preying creature, known for its cunning, which slyly falls upon the sleeping. While it sucks blood from the sleeping prey, it fans and cools him and makes his sleeping still more pleasant. Such is habit—or it is even worse; for the vampire seeks its prey among the sleeping, but it has no means to lull to sleep those who are awake. Habit, however, can do this. It slinks, sleep-lulling, upon a man, and then drains the blood of the sleeper while it coolingly fans him and makes sleep still more pleasant to him.—In this way spontaneous love can be changed into something else and made unrecognisable—for love is still recognisable in hate and jealousy. Just as when a forgotten dream flashes by again, one himself becomes aware that habit has changed him; he wants to make up for it, but he does not know where he can go to buy new oil<sup>28</sup> to rekindle his love. Then he becomes despondent, annoyed, weary of himself, weary of his love, weary of its being as paltry as it is, weary of not being able to get it transformed—alas, for he had not heeded the transformation of the eternal in time, and now he has lost the capacity to endure the cure. At times one sorrowfully sees a poverty-stricken man who had once lived prosperously, and still, how much more sorrowful than this is the change which one sees in a love changed almost to loathsomeness!—If, on the other hand, love undergoes the transformation of the eternal by becoming duty, it does not become characterised by habit; habit can never get power over it. To what is said of eternal life, that there is no sighing and no tears, one can add: there is no habit; certainly this is not saying anything less glorious. If you will save your soul or your love from habit's cunning—yes, men believe there are many ways of keeping oneself awake and secure, but there is really only one: the eternal's "You shall." Let the thunder of a hundred cannon remind you three times daily to resist the force of habit. Like that powerful Eastern emperor,<sup>29</sup> keep a slave who reminds you daily—keep hundreds. Have a friend who reminds you every time he sees you. Have a wife who, in love, reminds you early and late—but be careful that all this also does not become a habit! For you can become accustomed to hearing the thunder of a hundred cannon so that you can sit at the table and hear the most trivial, insignificant things far more clearly than the thunder of the hundred cannon—which you have become accustomed to hearing. And you can become so accustomed

to having a hundred slaves remind you every day that you no longer hear, because through habit you have acquired the ear which hears and still does not hear. No, only the eternal's "You shall" and the hearing ear which will hear this "shall" can save you from habit. Habit is the most miserable transformation, but on the other hand one can accustom himself to every change; only the eternal, and consequently that which has undergone the transformation of the eternal by becoming duty, is the unchangeable, but the unchangeable simply cannot become habit. However fast a habit fixes itself, it never becomes the unchangeable, even if the person becomes incorrigible. Habit is always that which *ought to be changed*; the unchangeable, on the contrary, is that which neither *can* nor *ought* to be changed! But the eternal never becomes old and never becomes habit.

*Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love made eternally free in blessed independence.* Is, then, spontaneous love not free? Has the lover no freedom at all in his love? But, on the other hand, should it be the purpose of the discourse to eulogise the miserable independence of self-love, which remains independent because it did not have the courage to bind itself and therefore remains independent through its cowardliness? Should it praise this miserable independence which swings suspended because it finds no foothold and is like him "who strolls here and there, an armed highwayman who turns in wherever twilight finds him?" Should it praise the miserable independence which independently submits to no bonds—at least not visibly? Far from it. On the contrary, in the foregoing portion we have pointed out that the manifestation of the highest riches is to have a need; therefore to have a need in freedom is the true expression of freedom. He in whom love is a need certainly feels himself free in his love, and the very one who feels himself entirely dependent, so that he would lose everything by losing the beloved, that very one is independent. Yet there is one condition—that he does not confuse love with possession of the beloved. If one were to say, "Either love or die" and thereby signify that life without loving is not worth living, we should say he is absolutely right. But if he understood it to mean possession of the beloved and consequently to mean either to possess the beloved or die, either win this friend or die, then we must say that such a misconceived love is dependent. As soon as love, in its relation to its object, does not in that relationship relate just as much to itself, although it still is entirely dependent, then it is dependent in a false sense, then the law of its existence is outside itself, and therefore it is in a contemptible sense,

in an earthly, in a temporal sense, dependent. But the love which has undergone the transformation of the eternal by becoming duty and which loves because it *shall* love—this love is independent; it has the law of its existence in the relationship of love itself to the eternal. This love can never become dependent in a false sense, for the only thing it is dependent upon is duty, and duty alone makes for genuine freedom. Spontaneous love makes a man free and in the next moment dependent. It is as with a man's existence. By coming into existence, by becoming a *self*,<sup>30</sup> he becomes free, but in the next moment he is dependent on this self. Duty, however, makes a man dependent and at the same moment eternally independent. "Only law can give freedom." Alas, we often think that freedom exists and that it is law which binds freedom. Yet it is just the opposite; without law freedom does not exist at all, and it is law which gives freedom. We also think that it is law which makes distinctions, because where there is no law there is no distinction. Yet it is just the opposite—when it is law which makes distinctions, it is in fact the law which makes everyone equal before the law.

In this way the "You shall" makes love free in blessed independence; such a love stands and does not fall with variations in the object of love; it stands and falls with eternity's law, but therefore it never falls. Such a love is not dependent on this or on that. It is dependent on the one thing—that alone which makes for freedom—and therefore it is eternally independent. But nothing can be compared with this independence. Sometimes the world praises a proud independence which thinks it has no need of being loved, if at the same time it "needs other men—not in order to be loved by them, but in order to love them, in order nevertheless to have someone to love." How false is this independence! It feels no *need* of being loved, and yet *needs* someone to love; consequently it stands in need of another person—in order to gratify its proud self-esteem. Is this not like the vanity which thinks it can dispense with the world and still needs the world, that is, needs the world to become conscious of the fact that vanity does not need the world! But the love which has undergone the transformation of the eternal by becoming duty feels unambiguously a need to be loved, and this need is therefore in eternally harmonising accord with the "You shall." But it can do without it if it *ought* to, while it still continues to love: is not this independence? This independence is dependent only on love itself through the *ought* of the eternal; it is not dependent on anything else, and therefore it is not dependent on the

object of love as soon as it appears to be something else. Yet such a situation does not mean that this independent love has then ceased, has changed into proud self-approval—this is dependence. No, love abides; it is independent. Unchangeableness is true independence; every change—be it the swoon of weakness or the strut of pride, be it sighing or self-satisfied—is dependence. If when another says, “I cannot love you any longer” one proudly answers, “Then I can also get along without loving you.”—Is this independence? Alas, it is dependence, for whether he shall continue to love or not is dependent on whether the other will love. But he who answers, “Then I *will* still continue to love you nevertheless”—his love is made eternally free in blessed independence. He does not say it proudly—dependent on his pride—no, he says it humbly, humbling himself under the eternal’s “You shall”; for that very reason he is independent.

*Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love eternally and happily secured against despair.*<sup>31</sup> Spontaneous love can become unhappy, can reach the point of despair. Again this might seem to be an expression of the strength of this love, that it has the power of despair, but this is mere appearance. Despair’s power, however highly it is regarded, is nevertheless impotence; its utmost is nothing more nor less than its defeat. Yet this—that spontaneous love can reach the point of despair—proves that it is in despair, that even when it is happy it loves with the power of despair—loves another person “more than himself, more than God.” Of despair it must be said: only he can despair who is in despair. When spontaneous love despairs over misfortune, it only reveals that it was in despair, that in happiness it had also been in despair. The despair lies in relating oneself with infinite passion to a single individual, for with infinite passion one can relate oneself—if one is not in despair—only to the eternal. Spontaneous love is in despair in this way; but when it becomes happy, as it is called, its state of desperation is hidden; when it becomes unhappy it is revealed—that it was in despair. On the other hand, the love which has undergone the transformation of the eternal by becoming duty can never despair, simply because it is not in despair. Despair is not something which can happen to a man, an event such as fortune or misfortune. Despair is a disrelationship in one’s inmost being; no fate or event can penetrate so far and so deep; events can only make manifest—that the disrelationship was there. For this reason there is only one assurance against despair: to undergo the transformation of the eternal through duty’s “You shall”; everyone who has not undergone this transformation is in despair. Good

fortune and prosperity can hide it; misfortune and difficulties, on the other hand, do not make him despair, as he thinks, but make manifest—that he was in despair. If one speaks otherwise, it is because one carelessly confuses the highest concepts. That which makes a man despair is not misfortune, but it is this: that he lacks the eternal. Despair is to lack the eternal; despair consists in not having undergone the transformation of the eternal through duty’s “You shall.” Despair is not, therefore, the loss of the beloved—that is misfortune, pain, and suffering; but despair is the lack of the eternal.

How, then, can this love which is commanded be secured against despair? Very simply—by the command—by this “You shall love.” It consists first and foremost in this that you must not love in such a manner that the loss of the beloved would make manifest that you were in despair—that is, you absolutely must not love despairingly. Is loving thereby forbidden? By no means. It would be strange, indeed, if the command which says, “You shall love,” were by its own order to forbid loving. Therefore the command only forbids loving in a manner which is not bidden. Essentially the command is not negative, but positive—it commands that you shall love. Therefore love’s command does not secure itself against despair by means of feeble, lukewarm grounds of comfort; that one must not take things too seriously, *etc.* Indeed, is such wretched prudence which “has ceased to sorrow” any less despair than the lover’s despair? Is it not rather a worse kind of despair! No, love’s command forbids despair—by commanding one to love. Who would have this courage without the eternal; who is prepared to say this “You shall” without the eternal, which, in the very moment when love wants to despair over its unhappiness, commands one to love. Where can this command have its base except in the eternal? For when it is made impossible to possess the beloved in time, the eternal says, “You shall love”; that is, the eternal then rescues love precisely by making it eternal. Let it be death which separates the two—then when the bereaved one sinks in despair, what can be of help? Temporal help is a still more doleful kind of despair; then it is the eternal which helps. When it says “You shall love,” it says, “Your love has an eternal worth.” But it does not say this comfortingly, for that would not help; it says this commandingly, precisely because there is danger afoot. And when the eternal says, “You shall love,” it becomes the eternal’s responsibility to make sure that it can be done. What is all other consolation compared with that of the eternal! What is all other soul-care compared to that of

the eternal! If it were to speak more mildly and say, "Console yourself," the sorrowing one would certainly have objections ready, but—yes, it is not because the eternal will proudly tolerate no objection—out of concern for the sorrowing one it commands, "You shall love." Marvellous words of comfort, marvellous compassion—because humanly speaking it is very odd, almost a mockery, to say to the despairing one that he *ought* to do that which is his only desire, but whose impossibility<sup>22</sup> brings him to despair. Is any other proof needed that the love-command is of divine origin? If you have tried it, or if you would try it, go to such a sorrowing person in the moment when the loss of the beloved is about to overpower him, and discover then what you can find to say. Confess that you want to bring consolation. The one thing you will not think of saying is, "You shall love." And on the other hand, see if it does not almost provoke the sorrowing one the very moment it is said, because it seems the most unsuitable thing to say on such an occasion. But you who have had this earnest experience, you who in the dark moment found emptiness and loathsomeness in the human grounds of consolation—but no consolation—you who discovered in a dreadful way that not even the exhortation of the eternal could keep you from sinking—you learned to love this "You shall" which saves from despair. What you perhaps often verified in lesser relationships, that true up-building consists in rigorous speaking, this you now learned in the deepest sense—that only the "You shall" eternally and happily rescues from despair. Eternally happy—yes, for only he is saved from despair who is eternally saved from despair. The love which has undergone the transformation of the eternal by becoming duty is not exempted from misfortune, but it is saved from despair, in fortune and misfortune equally saved from despair.

Behold, passion inflames, worldly sagacity cools, but neither this heat nor this cold nor the blending of this heat and this cold is the pure air of the eternal. There is something fiery in this heat and something sharp in this cold and in the blending something nondescript or an unconscious deceitfulness, as in the dangerous part of Spring. But this "You shall love" takes all the unsoundness away and preserves for eternity what is sound. So it is everywhere—this "You shall" of the eternal is the saving element, purifying, elevating. Sit with one who deeply mourns. There is relief for a moment if you have the ability to give to passion the expression of despair—something not even the mourner can do—but it is still false. It can be refreshingly tempting

for a moment if at the same time you have the knowledge and experience to hold out a prospect where the mourner sees none—but it is still false. But this "You shall sorrow" is both true and beautiful. I do not have the right to harden myself against the pains of life, for I *ought* to sorrow; but neither have I the right to despair, for I *ought* to sorrow; furthermore, neither do I have the right to stop sorrowing, for I *ought* to sorrow. So it is also with love. You have no right to harden yourself against this emotion, for you *ought* to love; but neither do you have the right to love despairingly, for you *ought* to love; just as little do you have the right to misuse this emotion in you, for you *ought* to love. You ought to preserve the love and you ought to preserve yourself and in and by preserving yourself to preserve the love. There where the merely human wants to storm forth, the command still holds; there where the merely human would lose courage, the command strengthens; there where the merely human would become tired and clever, the command flames up and gives wisdom. The command consumes and burns out what is unsound in your love, but through the command you shall be able to kindle it again when humanly considered it would cease. When you think you can easily give counsel, take the command as your counsel; but when you do not know how to counsel, the command shall prevail so that everything nevertheless comes out well.