

# OUR GOD



# OUR GOD

---

by

Octavius Winslow

*For this God is our God for ever and ever;  
He will be our guide even unto death.*

—Psalm 48:14



**Reformation Heritage Books**  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

2007

Copyright © 2007

**Reformation Heritage Books**

2965 Leonard St., NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49525  
616-977-0599 / Fax 616-285-3246  
e-mail: [orders@heritagebooks.org](mailto:orders@heritagebooks.org)  
website: [www.heritagebooks.org](http://www.heritagebooks.org)

ISBN 978-1-60178-005-8

Originally published  
London: John F. Shaw, 1870

*For additional Reformed literature, both new and used, request a free book list  
from Reformation Heritage Books at the above address.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Foreword . . . . .	vii
Author's Preface . . . . .	ix
Chapter 1: The God of Love . . . . .	1
Chapter 2: The God of Hope . . . . .	19
Chapter 3: The God of Patience . . . . .	35
Chapter 4: The God of Comfort . . . . .	51
Chapter 5: The God of Bethel . . . . .	67
Chapter 6: The God of Grace . . . . .	85
Chapter 7: The God of Holiness . . . . .	101
Chapter 8: The God of Peace . . . . .	117
Chapter 9: The God of Light . . . . .	133
Chapter 10: This God is Our God . . . . .	149



## FOREWORD

---

With great pleasure, we offer Octavius Winslow's devotional treatment of the perfections of God revealed to us in Scripture. Rather than advancing a comprehensive study on the attributes of God, Winslow limits his discussion to several moral virtues, such as His love, patience, comfort, grace, and holiness. Throughout *Our God*, Winslow presents the character of God as perfectly suited to the cognitive and experiential needs of His people. He demonstrates repeatedly how God's perfections viewed in Jesus Christ harmonize fully with the particular needs of the living church.

As is true of all of Winslow's writings, this volume is a gem. Representing devotional writing at its finest, it is replete with God- and Christ-centered memorable statements for spiritual edification. Use this book to treasure those sacred truths of Scripture that will mold your thoughts, words, and actions for Christian living.

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878) descended from Edward Winslow, a Pilgrim leader who crossed the Atlantic on the *Mayflower* in 1620. Octavius's father, Thomas, an army captain stationed in London, died when Octavius was seven years old. Shortly after that, Octavius's godly mother took her family of ten children to New York. All of the children became Christians; three sons became evangelical ministers. Octavius later wrote a book about his family's experiences from his mother's perspective, in a book titled *Life in Jesus: A Memoir of Mrs. Mary Winslow, Arranged from her Correspondence, Diary and Thoughts*.

Winslow was ordained as a pastor in 1833 in New York. He later moved to England, where he became one of the most valued ministers of the nineteenth century, largely due to the earnestness of his preaching and the excellence of his prolific writings. He held pastorates in Leamington Spa, Bath, and Brighton. He was also a popular speaker for special occasions, such as the opening of C. H. Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1861.

Winslow wrote more than forty books, most of which went through several printings. His Reformed convictions were clearly indicated in titles such as *Born Again, or, from Grace to Glory*;

*Heaven Opened; The Fullness of Christ; Christ Ever with You; The Glory of the Redeemer in His Person and Work; The Man of God, or, Spiritual Religion Explained and Enforced; The Tree of Life; Emmanuel, or the Titles of Christ; Hidden Life; Midnight Harmonies; Divine Realities; No Condemnation in Christ Jesus; Grace and Truth; Human Sympathy; The Inquirer Directed to an Experimental and Practical View of the Atonement; The Inquirer Directed to an Experimental and Practical View of the Work of the Holy Spirit; Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul; The Silver Trumpet; Christ the Theme of the Missionary; and Glimpses of the Truth as it is in Jesus.*

After a short illness, Octavius Winslow died on March 5, 1878. He was buried in Abbey Cemetery, Bath.

We thank “Grace Gems” for supplying us with the electronic text of this book. They also freely provide some thirty additional books by Octavius Winslow on their website (<http://www.grace-gems.org/>).

Thanks, too, to Kate DeVries for co-editing this book with me. The editing work consisted primarily of shortening lengthy sentences and minimizing Winslow’s penchant for double dashes. For the rest, minimal adjustments were made in spelling, grammar, and formatting. And thanks to Sharla Kattenberg for proofreading, and to Gary and Linda denHollander for their typesetting and proofreading.

Do you yearn to know God better? Read this book thoughtfully and prayerfully. In some ways, *Our God* may well be Winslow’s very best book, for what better subject can a believer desire to meditate on than the character of the triune God whom he loves, worships, and fears? And who is better suited to expound the grandeur and to stammer about the infinity of such a subject than this author who always seems to write profoundly and winsomely about the most sacred themes with remarkable reverence and a commanding flow of language? This warmly experiential treatment of the attributes of God engages the mind and heart as no other that I have read on this glorious subject. May God use this book mightily by the tutelage of His Spirit to conform us increasingly to the character of the Father and the Son.

—Joel R. Beeke

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

---

Luther characteristically remarked that he loved the personal pronouns of Scripture. This may be termed the "holy egotism" of the Bible, and it recognizes and teaches an important truth—the believer's personal appropriation to himself of the doctrines, precepts, and promises of God's Word. If "all things are ours," then it is the province of faith to lay its hand upon the great charter—the sufficiency of Jehovah, the fullness of Christ, the provisions of the covenant, the blessings of the gospel, and the promises of God—claiming and appropriating all as its own. The Bible is replete with these personal pronouns. "*My beloved is mine, and I am his.*" "*Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.*" "*I am thine.*" "*I live.*" "*By the grace of God, I am what I am.*"

The design of these pages is to raise the believer to this elevated and proper standard in his personal religion. Losing sight of all non-essential religious differences and ecclesiastical distinctions, and recognizing all who possess like precious faith as constituting "one body in Christ," essentially and individually *one*, it aims to cluster all around the mercy seat, sealing upon the lips of all this declaration: "This God is our God for ever and ever." Should this goal be promoted in a single case, these pages will not have been written in vain. To neutralize the doubts, dissipate the fears, and confirm the faith of a single believer in Christ, thus aiding him to place his foot upon another and higher rung in heaven's ladder, is a work worthy of a life.

We but imperfectly realize the greatness of God's love to His people, their preciousness to the heart of Jesus, and how incessantly they are the objects of the Spirit's care and comfort. Viewed in this threefold light, may not this writer hope that his *cup of cold water*, offered to the saints in the name of and dear to Christ, will be acceptable to the disciple, be approved of by the Master, and be abundant of many thanksgivings to God? To the triune God shall be the praise!

—Octavius Winslow

Brighton, January 1870



## Chapter 1

---

# THE GOD OF LOVE

*God is love.*

—1 John 4:16

In commencing a series of studies designed to unfold some of the perfections of our God as they are revealed in the Bible and embodied in Christ, we begin with what may be regarded the central one of all: the perfection of love, around which, in the salvation of men, all the others cluster, and with which they harmoniously and resplendently blend. If one perfection of God shines brighter in redemption than any other, it is this. Love is the focus of all the rest, the golden thread that draws and binds them all together in holy and beautiful cohesion. Love was the moving, controlling attribute in God's great expedient of saving sinners. Justice may have demanded it, holiness may have required it, wisdom may have planned it, and power may have executed it, but love originated the whole, and was the moving cause in the heart of God. The salvation of the sinner is not so much a manifestation of the justice, holiness, wisdom, or power of God, as it is a display of His love.

Had not God's love resolved to save man, all His other perfections must have been employed and displayed in destroying him. Love set its heart upon man, yearned to save him, and resolved to embark in the expedient of his salvation by conceiving a plan that harmonized all the other attributes

of His nature, and engaged them in the divine and wondrous work of redeeming mercy. It is not, therefore, without reason and design that we make the love of God the concentric truth from which we start.

The character of God as the God of love is only imperfectly understood, even by those who are the special objects of His regard. There are few saints of God who study His character and read His dispensations in the light of this wondrous perfection of His nature. They are awed by His greatness, impressed with His holiness, tremble at His power; but how few are subdued and drawn to Him by His love! They have not conceived, for the most part, of that loving view of His character, or cherished those kindly thoughts of His mercy, that would disarm their minds of the terror of the slave and fill their hearts with the affection of the child. And yet, a believing comprehension of God's loving and lovable character and of the great love with which He loves His saints lies at the root of all holy, filial, and unreserved obedience.

As there is no commanding, controlling, all-constraining power like that of love, so, in proportion to the deep view we have of the love of God to us in Christ Jesus, will be the response it awakens of confiding love in our hearts and of obedient love in our lives. May the present unfolding of God as the God of love dissipate the cold, distrustful, and dishonoring views and feelings of His character and rule we have too deeply cherished. May it enable us to read and understand, in a new and clearer light, the divine and wondrous declaration on which our meditation is founded: "God is love."

You have thought of Him, perhaps, as the God of holiness, the God of justice, the God of power, the God of judgment; come now and meditate on Him as the God of love. And while you muse on this marvelous and soul-subduing truth, may the fire of a responsive affection kindle in your heart so that your tongue breaks forth into thanksgiving and praise.

God is *essentially* the God of love. The words of our present meditation emphatically declare this: "God is love." This is, perhaps, the most sublime sentence of the Bible. This sentence could only arise from a divine mind. It is at once simple

and grand, intelligible and affecting. It involves a truth for an angel's mind, and yet a child's could grasp it. It reaches to the highest and descends to the lowest intellect. That the abstract term "love" and not the concrete term "loving" is used expresses something beyond the ordinary meaning of the word. What truth is thus embodied? Exactly the truth we are now attempting to vindicate: that God is essentially love. Love is not so much an attribute of God as it is His very essence. It is not so much a moral perfection of His being as it is His being Itself. He would not be God if He were not love; to deny that He is love would be to deny that He is God. To unrobe Him of this essential quality of His nature would be tantamount to the unrobing Him of His essential Godhead. He would not be God were He not love!

As I have remarked, this is the central perfection around which all the others revolve as satellites, and from which, harmonized in the salvation of man, they derive their position and glory. For example, omnipotence is the power of love, omniscience is the eye of love, omnipresence is the atmosphere of love, holiness is the purity of love, justice is the fire of love; thus might we travel the circle of the divine perfections and find each one to be simply another form of the essential perfection of love.

In the words "God is love," we have a perfect portrait of the eternal and incomprehensible Jehovah, drawn by His own unerring hand.

The expression used differs materially from that usually employed by the inspired writers in speaking of the divine perfections. They say, "God is merciful," "God is just," "God is holy"; but they never say, "God is mercy," "God is justice," "God is holiness." On the contrary, in this instance, the apostle says, "God is love" —love itself—instead of saying, "God is loving, good, or kind." By this expression, we must understand that God is all pure, unmixed love, and that the other moral perfections are many modifications of this love. His justice, His mercy, His truth, and His faithfulness are just many different names for His love or goodness. As the light coming from the sun may eas-

ily be separated into many different colors, so the holy love of God, the light and glory of His nature, may be separated into a variety of moral attributes and perfections. Though separated, they are still love. His whole nature and essence is love. His will, His works, His words, are love; He is nothing, and can do nothing but love. (Payson)

Love is so completely the essence of God that it shines out in every perfection of His nature and is exhibited in every act of His administration. He is nothing and can do nothing foreign to Himself; consequently, He is nothing and can do nothing in which His love is not an essential quality. All the streams of a fountain must essentially come from the same source; all the rays of light, whatever their prismatic hues, essentially flow from the same sun. And were not God's perfections thus modified and softened by love—were they not led on by this commanding perfection of His nature—each one, and all combined, would be terribly against us. His wisdom would baffle us, His power would crush us, His holiness would terrify us, His justice would condemn us, and His truth would stand by, pledged to the stern and utmost fulfillment of their terrible and righteous display.

Now, God is essential love. He is not only loving, but He is love; is not only good, but goodness. All others are loving and good not of themselves, but by derivation. The essence of all creatures is good, because God made them and pronounced everything He made as so; but they are not essentially good, or else they could not change their nature and become bad. God is love from Himself, and not from another; He is absolutely, independently love. His love is not a quality or accident of His being, imported into His essence—something foreign to Himself; it is His essence itself. If we admit His eternity—and we cannot rationally deny it—we must admit that love is the eternal, necessary, and independent essence of His being. Creatures are lovable and loving, but God is love. Every creature must derive its love and its capacity for loving from God; but God derives His love and His power of loving from no other being but Himself.

Let us here pause in deep adoration of a truth so vast yet so intelligible, so glorious yet so precious. In coming to a God of absolute love, with that love flowing to us through the cross of Christ, we feel we are coming to One whose love can cover over all our sin, misery, and unworthiness and meet our utmost need, without diminishing a hair's breadth of its boundless sufficiency. It is a great comfort to faith thus to deal with Him who is essential love; no fear about the sufficiency of His supply can haunt our minds. I may fear that the river may dry out, but not the ocean that feeds it; that the beam may vanish, but not the sun that emits it; because their resources are within themselves, independent, and inexhaustible. And thus, when we come to God through Christ, as to a Father whose nature and whose name is "love," we are assured that, whatever other sources of power and sympathy fail, God will never disappoint us. Accepting our draft upon His all-sufficiency, He will honor it to its utmost demand.

This suggests another related perspective on God as the God of love. His love is *infinite* in its degree. We have just seen that God and love are sacred synonyms, divinely and essentially the same. His love, therefore, must share the infinity of His being. It is a serious defect in the religion of many that their faith deals too faintly with the infinity of God. This leads to a limiting of the Holy One of Israel. Finite beings ourselves, all our ideas and conceptions of God's greatness are bounded by the finite. This restricting of Jehovah dwarfs our personal Christianity and robs Him of His divine glory. But God is infinite, and therefore His love to us is boundless and fathomless. This view of His infinite greatness is not intended to paralyze, but to strengthen our faith—not to repel, but to attract us. The very immensity of God is one of our greatest encouragements to approach Him. If David made the greatness of his sin a plea with God for its pardon—"For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, *for it is great*" (Ps. 25:11)—surely we may plead the greatness of God's love when we ask anything from His hand.

Although in coming to His infinity we may appear like a child dipping its tiny shell into the depth of the ocean think-

ing to exhaust it, nevertheless, small though our vessel may be with which we draw, we must feel that nothing less than infinite love can meet the deep need and satiate the intense yearnings of our soul. In proportion as the Holy Spirit leads us to see the depths of our sinfulness, poverty, and nothingness, we will learn that nothing less than a God of infinite love, grace, and sufficiency could meet our case.

Approach this love, then, my reader, with the full persuasion of its infinite measurement. It can fill the large vessel as well as the small to its utmost capacity. It can flood over all the ruggedness and barrenness of your nature, its sweetly flowing waves filling the shallows and veiling the chafing of life's daily conflict with sin and sorrow. Do not let the greatness of your transgressions appall you; do not let the deep needs of your soul discourage you; do not let the turpitude of your guilt dismay you; and do not let the intensity of your grief overwhelm you. You deal with a God whose love is infinite and who can reach infinitely beyond the farthest extent of your need. Come with your great and your minor sins; come with your deep and your shallow needs; come to His infinite ocean of love, "in which the elephant may swim, and which the lamb may ford."

Before we reach the different illustrations of God's character as the God of love, we remark that *love is the central element of His government*. In human governments it is not so; in this exists a marked difference between God's government and man's. God's government begins where man's government ends—in mercy. Man works from the central attribute of justice; God, from the central attribute of love. Before He draws His hand and His glittering sword of justice to punish, His heart would devise all schemes of mercy and employ all means of kindness so that, if possible, mercy might rejoice over judgment.

Sinner, thus has the God of love been dealing with you! He has long dealt with you in mercy and forbearance. Judgment has lingered. He has hid His power. His mercy has restrained His wrath. And but for this, hell must have been your present home. And still you sin; still you fight against God. Still

you despise His Son, reject His grace, scorn His salvation, and rush heedlessly on the thick bosses of His buckler. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11). But there is a limit even to divine forbearance and infinite mercy. When God, so to speak, has exhausted all means of kindness and love, justice steps in and executes His righteous vengeance and wrath. Mercy gives place to judgment, and the sinner is righteously and eternally condemned. What do you say then, sinner, to this love? Has it interested, instructed, *won* you? Do not presume upon its patience and continuance. Throw down the weapons of your rebellion and submit to the government of God. Repent and believe. Cast yourself in contrition at His feet and embrace in faith the scepter of His grace, extended in the Person and work of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. That scepter will not always be outstretched; neither will it always be the scepter of grace. God is a God of *justice* as well as of love; a God that takes vengeance as well as a God that shows mercy. Listen to His solemn words: "If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me" (Deut. 32:41). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31), for "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

Do not make light of *eternal punishment*. Do not think it is a minor thing to fall under the vengeance of a holy, just, and gracious God. Mercy is fearful when it turns to wrath! Love is consuming when it turns to anger! There is no wrath like "the wrath of the Lamb." With hell flashing in your face, with the wrath to come—wrath, forever and ever to come—preparing for its dread and endless outpouring, with the certain prospect before you of your undying conscience and the unquenchable flame of bodily and soul suffering, why, why will you die? Is sin so sweet, the world so attractive, or the creature so satisfying that you are willing to imperil your everlasting happiness, to barter your soul, for it? Imagine, if possible, what it means to dwell in everlasting burning, to lie down in eternal fire! Spirit of the living God, awaken the sleeping

sinner and quicken the dead soul! Cause men everywhere to realize, in some degree, what a fearful, what an appalling, indescribable thing it is to be lost forever.

What a mercy that you are not already in hell, and that there is a door open to you into heaven! That door is Christ. "I am the door," He says. Stop trying to enter heaven by the door of your good works and religious duties or by the merits and intercessions of men, saints, or angels. There is only one door into heaven: faith in the Savior who died for sinners on the cross, and whose blood and righteousness supply all the merit God requires or man can bring. Jesus came to save sinners; He saves them now, saves them to the uttermost, saves them freely and forever. Why not you?

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the different modes by which God has manifested and revealed His love to man.

All *nature* is a tracing of the God of love—dim, it is true; marred by the fall and tainted by sin, yet sufficiently vivid and palpable to indicate, if not that God is love, yet that God does love. Only an atheist of the deepest dye can gaze on the worlds above and the earth beneath and see no trace of divine goodness, no evidence of the fact that God loves man. If creation demonstrates the being of God—if the things that are made clearly evidence His eternal power and Godhead so that men are left without excuse who deny His being—then every star that glows, every flower that blooms, every gem that sparkles, and every stream that murmurs is an evidence that He who made everything for mankind loves us with the love of infinite benevolence.

It is true that nature does not reveal the moral character of God, nor does it answer the great question, "What must I do to be saved?" Yet it testifies that God is, and that God is good; and from the hyssop on the wall to the lofty cedar in Lebanon, from the atom dancing in the sunbeam to the Alp piercing the clouds, it summons man to fall down and worship Him whose goodness is reflected in all His works.

*Providence* is another unfolding of the God of love. What is providence but divine goodness molding and tinting, shap-

ing and directing, all the affairs of the children of men? That person's life must be a blank if no trace of God's love is found in it—nothing in their creation and preservation, and all the blessings of this life; nothing in the changes through which they have come—prosperity and adversity, sunshine and shade; nothing in the hand which so strangely guided them and mapped their path, overruling and directing all the events and affairs of daily life, educing good from evil, changing misfortunes into blessings, extracting sweet from the bitter, testifying that God is good and that God is love.

Indeed, in all this, the goodness of God is visible. My reader, look only into the book of providence—your personal and daily history—and see if there exists no trace of the God of love in it all.

Thus all nature and all providence, whether it is the sunbeam that smiles or the tempest that darkens, testifies that God is, and that He is love.

There's nothing *bright* above, below,  
 From flowers that bloom, to stars that glow,  
 But in its light my soul can see  
 Some feature of Thy Deity.

There's nothing *dark* below, above,  
 But in its gloom I trace Thy love;  
 And meekly wait the moment when  
 Thy touch shall turn all bright again.

But in neither creation nor providence do we find so clear and emphatic a manifestation of the God of love as we have in the "glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tim. 1:11). The gospel is all that we need as sinners on our way to eternity. It meets all the inquiries and yearnings of our souls. It supplies an answer to the most momentous inquiry that human lips ever asked: "How shall man be just with God?" And it supplies a solution to the most solemn and profound problem of God's moral government: "How can God be just, and yet justify the ungodly?"

Where, then, can the sin-burdened soul find an answer to its earnest, anxious inquiry—"What must I do to be saved?"—but in the gospel of the grace of God? What a marvelous unfolding of the love of God to man is the message of the gospel of the pardon of sin, of the justification of the sinner, of the adoption into God's family of him who was an enemy—all founded upon the one atonement, the perfect sacrifice, the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ!

In the great catalog of blessings the God of love has given you, place His glorious gospel at the very beginning. It is truly a joyful sound, good news, and glad tidings. The trump of jubilee echoing through the camp of Israel with its entrancing melody and thrilling announcements, proclaiming its glorious amnesty, could not surpass the good news that the gospel brings of sin forgiven, of the great debt paid, of deliverance from the captivity of sin and Satan, of an inheritance lost but regained, of peace with God through Christ that passes all understanding—and all by free grace and through simply believing. Oh, thank God for the gospel! Prize it above your choicest blessing.

Pitch your earthly tent close by its ever-flowing, life-giving, life-sustaining streams. Devote your substance, consecrate your powers, and employ your time and influence in maintaining and propagating this joyful sound of a full, free, and present salvation to poor, lost, self-destructive souls. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound" (Ps. 89:15). Seek to be enrolled among their number. Whatever else you seek to know, seek above all to know and understand the gospel of the grace of God. Become its lowly student, its earnest inquirer, its humble believer, its devout and holy follower. "Count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:8). In the solemn, tremendous hour of death when all other knowledge will prove of no avail, the gospel of Christ will stand by you and, with the salvation it will then unfold, the consolation it will impart, the love of God it will reveal, and the hopes it will inspire, will invest the closing scene of life with dignity and repose, and light up the valley down which you pass with a radiance that shall deepen in its

effulgence until all is lost amid the splendor and the purity of eternal day.

But the great manifestation of the love of God yet remains to be considered: *God's love embodied and expressed in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ*. How emphatic are the terms in which this great truth is recorded. Listen to Jesus Himself: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Listen to His apostle: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10).

How corrective these declarations are of the erroneous view of God's love which some have entertained: that the coming of Jesus as the Savior was to procure, rather than to manifest—to inspire, rather than to reveal—God's love to man. In other words, that Christ died to redeem us, and therefore God loves us; that Jesus originated rather than expressed the love that filled the heart of Jehovah. What a dishonoring misapprehension is this! What a libel on the character of God as the God of love.

But take the converse of this idea and you have the correct interpretation of God's love—that is, Christ died for us *because* God loved us. In other words, the atonement of Christ was not the cause, but the consequence—not the origin, but the manifestation—of the great love with which God loved us.

Who can ever fully spell that marvelous monosyllable, "so"? "God so loved" us. Who can fathom the immensity of the love compressed within its wondrous, boundless meaning? Our ennobled and perfected faculties will be the only suitable instrument, heaven the scene, and eternity the limit, of its study.

Behold how great and resplendent the love of God appears as manifested in Christ Jesus! It would have been impossible to transcend this manifestation of love; He would have eclipsed Himself. It is no ideal and exaggerated expression:

His love was so divine, only He could know it; so hidden, only He could reveal it; so vast, only He could express it; and so precious, no costlier gift could embody it than His own co-equal, co-eternal, and beloved Son. Herein is love, and only here! In all other things, as we have remarked, we infer that God *does* love; but here, in the person and work of Jesus, we learn that God *is* love. All other manifestations of His love are shadows. Christ is the full-orbed Sun, pouring down in subdued and softened rays an infinite tide of light, life, and beauty around a sinful and rebellious empire.

“God so loved the world” with a love of benevolence, and so loved the church with a love of redemption, that He gave His only-begotten Son. By the love of benevolence, the world is kept from instant destruction; and by the love of redemption, His elect church is taken out of the world, saved, and glorified.

In this light God would have His people study His character and read His heart as the God of love. This is the only mirror which truly and perfectly reflects, with resplendent power, the marvelous truth that “God is love.” Only in Christ do we read His sin-forgiving love. “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?” (Mic. 7:18). It is love, dear believer, that has forgiven all your great debt, blotted out your transgressions as a thick cloud, and cast all your sins behind His back, and He will remember them no more forever because He is love. My soul, measure this great love by the greatness, the number, and the enormity of your sins, and then exclaim, “Oh, the depth and immensity of that love, that could flood over and forever bury sins red as crimson, transgressions countless as the sands!”

God’s love is a soul-justifying love. It throws a robe of righteousness around the believing soul and presents it before Him, the holy Lord God, unblemished, and unreprouvable in His sight. Oh, wondrous love, that provides, imputes, and invests the soul with a righteousness so divine that it is discharged from the court of divine justice with the indictment quashed, the conviction reversed, the sinner fully and forever

delivered from condemnation, and all through the “righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe” (Rom. 3:22). “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1).

The love of God is also adopting love. It makes us His children, who once were rebels; His friends, who once were foes. By His electing and sovereign grace, He takes us into His family and makes us heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, teaching us to approach Him in prayer, crying, “Abba, Father!” “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1). What more shall we say? This love will not cease before it has brought us home to Himself in heaven, having enabled us to glorify Him here, permitting us to enjoy Him fully, and forever, hereafter — and it will not cease even then.

We have yet to trace the love of God *in His dealings with His people*. The path along which our heavenly Father is conducting us homeward is a checkered path. It is paved with stones—precious stones—of many shapes and hues. But faith reads it all, and gratitude accepts it all, as resolved into God’s eternal and unchangeable love. There can be nothing but love in the conduct of Him—mysterious and painful though that conduct may be—who laid our sins, curse, and condemnation on His beloved Son, wounding, bruising, and putting Him to grief and to death for us. In this light, then, we are to read all His dealings with us, whether they be of judgment or of mercy. Is it judgment? Is the discipline of God a discipline of trial for you, of sorrow, of suffering? He is still the God of love, and from His love springs all this discipline of trial. Love will control the furnace and temper the flames, and conduct the whole to such a salutary and holy result that will cause the desert to ring and heaven to resound with the music of your thanksgiving and praise. “For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb. 12:6). “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Rev. 3:19).

In the holy light of His love, then, read and interpret every cloud that shades you, every dispensation that afflicts you, ev-

ery sorrow that wrings your heart with anguish. Is your song of mercy? Then love has dropped the veil it wore, and stands before you in its own undisguised and unmingled tenderness and power, asking for your warmest acknowledgment and your loftiest praise. Thus God's love shapes and guides the whole scene. It traces everything and blends with all His doings. It sweetens the bitter dispensation and makes the sweet one sweeter. It brightens the dark cloud and makes the bright one brighter. It may be a hard lesson for faith to learn, a bold acknowledgment for grace to make, and a startling inference for love to draw—that all God's trying, wounding, disappointing dispensations towards His people are the results of His everlasting love—but nevertheless, it is so.

He is the God of love and He cannot change. He who smiles today and frowns tomorrow—who kisses now and smites us later—is the same tender, faithful Father whose love knows no change and whose faithfulness never fails. When the sorrow is past and the storm subsides, and in calmer moments we review all the way that He has led us, to what conclusion can we come but that, through it all, true to His nature and faithful to His promises, He was the God of love?

Now we see that love planted that thorn hedge; love crushed that fond hope; love stirred up that soft nest; love blighted that sweet flower; and love alone permitted you to take that step which brought you into such perplexity and such grief. Thus out of the ravenous eater comes food, and from the fiery furnace, silver so pure and gold so refined.

My soul, your gold is true, but full of dross;  
 Your Savior's breath refines you with some loss;  
 His gentle furnace makes you pure as true;  
 You must be melted before you are cast anew.

One more view of this subject; and this shall be a practical and sanctifying one. God so loves us as to make love the great controlling motive power of our religious life. "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Such is the teaching of His Word. The religion we receive from Christ is the religion of love, and

the religious life to which it is to give birth in us is to be a life of love to God, securing our obedience, enlisting our service, and constraining us, by the mercies of God, to yield our bodies living sacrifices, thus teaching and strengthening us to deny all “ungodliness and worldly lusts” and to “live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:12).

The love of God will become a motivating power in our lives to the extent that we experience it in our souls. The outward holy life of a believer is the result of an inward principle of love to God. “The love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor. 5:14). For this cause the apostle breathed that precious prayer in behalf of the Thessalonian saints: “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God” (2 Thess. 3:5). Standing on the shore of this boundless, fathomless ocean, he prays that the Lord, the Spirit, might lead their hearts into its infinite depths. What a necessary, holy prayer! What a vast and precious blessing! Their hearts were sinful, sad, and weary; guilt tainted them, bereavement shaded them, conflict and service exhausted them; and now, the apostle prays that they might be led into the sanctifying, soothing, life-refreshing love of God.

Into this ocean of divine love, my reader, let *your* heart plunge, just as it is. Take all its sin, sorrow, and weariness to no other purifying, comforting source but the shoreless, soundless sea of the love of God in Christ Jesus. Descend, in simple, childlike faith, into its depths, and lose yourself amid its infinitude! With this love of God filling and overflowing your heart, all will be well. Winter will bloom into spring and spring will blush into summer and summer will ripen into the golden fruit of autumn. Oh, how the love of God changes the aspect of everything! Afflictions are revealed to be disguised blessings; trials, proofs of divine faithfulness; clouds, chariots paved with love and penciled with light, in which the Savior comes to us.

God, revealing His glory and His grace in Christ Jesus to your soul, will bring you into the sweetest acquiescence with all His will, and cause you to go forth and, by the sacred, all-powerful influence of a holy life, silent, luminous, and penetrating as light, proclaim to every creature that “God

is love," that God loves *you*, and that you love God. Blessed Savior!

I'd carve Thy passion on the bark;  
 And every wounded tree  
 Shall droop, and bear some mystic mark  
 That Jesus died for me.

The suitors shall wonder when they read,  
 Inscribed on all the grove,  
 That Heaven itself came down and bled,  
 To win a mortal's love.

Go forth and be loving, even as your Father in heaven is loving. Let your heart be as large in its creature capacity as God's heart is in its divine. If He has a large heart for you, beware of a small heart for your fellow man. If His heart is open, see that yours is not closed. And since He does not depart at our sinfulness, ingratitude, injury, or unworthiness, be an imitator of God. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). God has so dealt with you, overcoming and winning your evil heart with the goodness and love of His own. Go and do likewise towards all who have injured you, wounded you, and spitefully used you, and so shall you be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. Live for God, and act towards others as one who will shortly flee from a world of sin, infirmity, and strife—from all its tainting, wounding, and misunderstanding—and find yourself playing on the surface and plunging into the depths of the ocean of love which flows and sparkles beneath and around the throne of God and the Lamb.

Oh, Lord Jesus Christ, if a little taste of Thy love here below, as it flows through the channels of Thy sacred Word and ordinances, is so sweet, what will the full draught be above!

When shall this happy day of rescue be!  
 When I shall make a near approach to Thee,  
 Be lost in love, and wrapped in ecstasy?  
 Oh, when shall I behold Thee, all serene,  
 Without this envious, cloudy veil between?

'Tis true, the sacred elements impart  
Thy virtual presence to my faithful heart,  
But to my sense still unrevealed Thou art.  
This, though a great, is an imperfect bliss;  
To see a shadow for the God I wish.  
My soul a more exalted pitch would fly,  
And view Thee in the heights of majesty.

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).