

Love Believes All Things:

Paul's *Hymn to Love*, Heraclitus's *Ever-lasting Logos*, and the Way of Total Surrender

"For the most part the knowledge of things divine escapes us because of our unbelief."

- Heraclitus *The Fragments*

Today, August 7th, St. Paul's *Hymn to Love* (1 Corinthians 13) was chanted in the temple during the Divine Liturgy. Abbot Damien gave a brief homily on it, saying that it was a favorite of many people, but that it made him cringe because of the great demand and responsibility that St. Paul puts before us. I believe that it's a favorite of many people (myself included) because there is something deeply true about it. We recognize it from the depths of our being. It is an echo from of our true home, Paradise lost. It makes us cringe because we see how far away we are from, in the words of a Carmelite prayer to St. Therese, "the Homeland of unchanging Love".

Most of the *Hymn to Love* is fairly easy to grasp and feels natural in the truest sense of the word. It reads like it was spilled onto the page in an enraptured swoon of the Divine Spirit moving in St. Paul, a cathartic pouring out of holy longing. However, there is one verse, and in particular one part of the verse that I could not immediately understand and which I chose to meditate on:

"(Love)...bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Love 'believes all things'. What does this mean? A cursory and superficial reading might make one think that Love is foolish and gullible, that it accepts obvious lies as truth. But we need to ask ourselves what it means to believe. To accept something and to trust in it, to feel the truth in it. To believe all things is to accept that all things are true, even things in opposition with one another. It is to accept that there is a truth that is deeper than immediately apparent to our ever-discriminating minds. And belief is not a frozen and stagnant state; belief is living, breathing, and evolving. And so to believe all things would mean to accept and trust in things that are in total contradiction to one another, not just once, but continually. It is an undermining of what we think we know and replacing it with faith, a faith in the totality of Being itself, in Is-ness, the Way things are — in Christ. It is a total surrender to Love. It is absurd to the world, yet therein lies the secret, a key to the Kingdom. "Let no one deceive himself. If any of you thinks he is wise in this age, he should become a fool, so that he may become wise." (1 Corinthians 3:18)

Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher of the late 6th century BCE, announced the existence of the Eternal Logos, the Word. According to Heraclitus, the Eternal Logos is the divine law, the ordering principle of the universe that unifies all things. Heraclitus says that all things are in constant flux ("One cannot step twice into the same river."), in constant opposition to other things ("Fire lives the death of air, and air the death of fire; water lives the death of earth, and earth the death of water.") but also that there is one thing that remains the same which brings all disparate things together ("Man does not understand how that which is torn in different directions comes into accord with itself."). This eternally present unifier he deemed the 'Logos'. He says that the Logos, from which all created things spring,

remains eternally the same in the midst of continual flux and maintains an equilibrium, and that this Eternal Logos is in us and is an infinite depth within our souls:

“It is wise to listen not to me, but to the Logos, and to confess that all things are one.”

“This Logos is everlasting, but men are unable to comprehend it before they have heard it or even after they have heard it for the first time.”

“You could not discover the boundaries of the soul though you tried every path, so deep does it’s reason(Logos) reach down.”

- Heraclitus *The Fragments*

Nearly 600 years later we have St. John The Theologian announcing that this Eternal Logos, the Word of God, had “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14) in Jesus Christ. In Jesus’s divine life we are given clues of the *Coincidentia oppositorum*, the ‘coincidence of opposites’ and their mysterious unification through Christ the Divine Logos; Jesus Christ, the Word, who was both “with God *and* was God”, both fully human *and* fully divine, both immanent *and* transcendent, born of a virgin *and* mother, who both died *and* transcended death, and who unites heaven *and* earth. “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Romans 8:22) and surely Heraclitus must have felt the kick of Christ *in utero*. And from the mouth of Christ the Eternal Logos Himself we have been given our instruction in simple words: to love God with all our hearts, souls, and minds and to love each other as ourselves(Matthew 22:37-39). The Eternal Logos, The-One-Who-Is, walked among us and His word was, “Love.”

“He became an outlaw
In order to restore the law.
He took the sentence of death
In order to abolish the sentence of death.
Those who condemned Him according to the law
Were themselves condemned by the law,
For the only law He gave was love,
And that love condemned them.
They were judged by love;
And He Who is Love, and is therefore Judge,
Was judged by them as a transgressors
Of their transgression.”

- Hieromonk Damascene *Christ the Eternal Tao*

How do we ‘love God with all our hearts, souls, and minds’ except by loving everything and everyone without discrimination, a selfless and sacrificial love? If God is ‘everywhere present and filling all things’, the totality of being, and we are to love him with the totality of our being, then are we not then called to a total surrender to love, a love so complete and utterly consuming that we are to be consumed in it ourselves? Are we not called to love in the same completeness of God so that we also become love?

“Love is eternal.” sings St. Paul(1 Corinthians 13:8). In Love’s unification of all things it transcends all things. Love is in all things and all things in Love. Things separated and at odds come together as one in Love. Love *is*. And with love for even our enemies, and with love for God even when we are faced with suffering and loss and injustice, we will come to know what Jesus means when he says, “Nor will people say, ‘Look, here it is,’ or ‘There it is.’ For you see, the kingdom of God is in your midst.” The kingdom will not be found in the world, in a particular place or time or thing because these are all fragments being swept away by the endless flux and passing.

“For him who is perfect in love and has reached the summit of dispassion there is no difference between his own and another’s, or between Christians and unbelievers, or between slave and free, or even between male and female. But because he has risen above the tyranny of the passions and has fixed his attention on the single nature of man, he looks on all in the same way and show the same disposition to all.”

- Maximus the Confessor *Centuries on Love*

Jesus’s command of love for even enemies, even people who do you wrong, is not a call to do these things for their own sake, in vain, or to do them begrudgingly or for the secret desire to appear righteous to others. We should do these things so we come into accord with Christ, in harmony with love. They should start as practices of selflessness until we manifest them almost autonomously, our love complete so that we see all things as they are – One. “Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.” (

But we do not heed Christ’s words. We chase the wind. The days run through our fingers like sand and we desperately try to hold on to them. Every moment melts into a fading dream. All things tend toward dissolution and death. “All things flow; nothing abides” says Heraclitus. And this we cannot bear. We frantically search for the thing that will last, the thing that will ease our anxiety in this quickly fading life, but no thing seems to suffice. We identify ourselves with the partial, and this is an error, a sin. The teacher in Ecclesiastes laments this deep and essential ache in the human condition:

“All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.”

- Ecclesiastes 1:8-9

We are broken and we are lost. We live in the world and of the flesh, which is filled with suffering and anxiety and quickly moving towards death. To live by the flesh is to live in a world of illusions, whereby we identify ourselves with the particular, the partial, a fragment of the whole, both scattered outwardly in the seemingly endlessly multi-varied world of things, and inwardly in the seemingly endless chattering thoughts and desires and worries. We give ourselves to our passions and yet are never ultimately satisfied by them. We put ourselves at the mercy of passing states, of ceaseless highs and lows, of endless gains and losses, endless good and bad. Anything you gain in joy you will inevitably lose in grief. This why St. Paul says “...if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” (Romans 8:13).

“Only love overcomes the fragmentation of human nature.”

- Maximus the Confessor *Centuries on Charity*

In this short and seemingly simple passage, Maximus the Confessor identifies this major problem in human nature in its fallen state, but also the solution; But Maximus champions the Love of Christ as our salvation, as Paul did before him. Love will overcome the fragmentation by gathering up all things into itself. Love will overcome our fear in the face of death and “godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death”. To repent and weep is an abasement of the self so that we may ascend to the Divine Love of Christ. And at the top of the mountain of love we can still see the ever changing storm of passions far below, but we are safe from them. All things are to become united in Love, in the childlike trust of Love, like every color is united into pure white light in a prism, like the pure white light of Christ transfigured. And perhaps we too will be transfigured by his Eternal Love and truly become children of light.

“The simple heart finds no hard way,
good thought finds no wounds.
Deep in the illuminated mind is no storm.

Surrounded on every side by the
beauty of the open country,
one is free of doubt.

Below
is like above.

Everything is above.
Below is nothing, but the ignorant think
they see.

Now you know grace. It is for your salvation.
Believe and live and be saved.”

- Odes of Solomon, Ode 34

By believing in all things you no longer believe many different things, but you only believe one thing. To believe all things is belief in its fullness. It is childlike trust in The-One-Who-Is. It is proper mode of being and living in the world. How could there be any fragmentation in consciousness, fear and anxiety and sadness, if everything were believed in and trusted? All things would only just *be*, including us. We have no fear of anything if we put ourselves not at the mercy of the dying and fractured states of the flesh, but at the mercy of the ever-present and unending glow of Love from which all things spring, then what could ever be taken away from us? We will come to live in the Holy Trinity, in the eternally present moment; we will ascend from Love, by Love, to Love - and death has nothing.

Glory be to Jesus Christ.

