

### 3.5 | *Charity and Mercy*

The main texts quoted in this section take their departure from the message of the Gospels that God is love and from the precepts of charity enunciated by Jesus Christ—that one should love God with all one's heart and all one's soul, and one's neighbor as one's self. The quotations from Christian theologians, apologists, and poets constitute an extended commentary on the love that is an obligation for those who follow the teachings of Christ. Augustine and Aquinas, particularly, show how fundamental and far-reaching the precepts of charity are, and explain why, of the three theological virtues—faith, hope, and charity—the greatest is charity.

One impulse of charity, too often allowed

to obscure more important aspects of it, involves care or concern for the relief of the needy or suffering. We have, therefore, included passages that praise or recommend almsgiving. We have also included texts that extol mercy and recommend forgiveness to temper strict justice. These too reflect aspects of charity in the theological or religious sense, whether Jewish or Christian. But we have not included here passages that dwell on the benevolent impulses at the heart of friendship when pagan or later writers who treat such love approach it entirely from a secular and not a religious point of view.

1 Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

*Leviticus 19:18*

2 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.

He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children.

*Psalms 103:8-17*

3 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.

*Proverbs 25:21-22*

4 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

*Matthew 6:1-4*

5 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

Then the lord of that servant was moved with

compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

*Matthew 18:23-35*

- 6 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

*Matthew 25:34-40*

- 7 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

*Mark 12:28-31*

- 8 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

*Luke 10:25-37*

- 9 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.

And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and

with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

*John 8:1-11*

- 10 It is more blessed to give than to receive.

*Acts 20:35*

- 11 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envicth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

Doth not behave itself unscemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

*I Corinthians 13:1-13*

- 12 Charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

*I Peter 4:8*

- 13 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

*I John 4:7-8*

- 14 Kindness or humanity has a larger field than bare justice to exercise itself in; law and justice we cannot, in the nature of things, employ on others than men; but we may extend our goodness and charity even to irrational creatures; and such acts flow from a gentle nature, as water from an abundant spring. It is doubtless the part of a kind-natured man to keep even worn-out horses and dogs, and not only take care of them when they are foals and whelps, but also when they are grown old.

Plutareh, *Marcus Cato*

- 15 [The] divine Master inculcates two precepts—the love of God and the love of our neighbour—and as in these precepts a man finds three things he has to love—God, himself, and his neighbour—and that he who loves God loves himself thereby, it follows that he must endeavour to get his neighbour to love God, since he is ordered to love his neighbour as himself. He ought to make this endeavour in behalf of his wife, his children, his household, all within his reach, even as he would wish his neighbour to do the same for him if he needed it; and consequently he will be at peace, or in well-ordered concord, with all men, as far as in him lies.

Augustine, *City of God*, XIX, 14

- 16 We are commanded to love one another: but it is a question whether man is to be loved by man for his own sake, or for the sake of something else. If it is for his own sake, we enjoy him; if it is for the sake of something else, we use him. It seems to me, then, that he is to be loved for the sake of something else. For if a thing is to be loved for its own sake, then in the enjoyment of it consists a happy life, the hope of which at least, if not yet the reality, is our comfort in the present time. But a curse is pronounced on him who places his hope in man.

Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, I, 22

- 17 But if they shall so love God with all their heart, and all their mind, and all their soul, that still all the heart, and all the mind, and all the soul shall not suffice for the worthiness of this love; doubtless they will so rejoice with all their heart, and all their mind, and all their soul, that all the heart, and all the mind, and all the soul shall not suffice for the fulness of their joy.

Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogium*, XXV

18 Charity signifies not only the love of God but also a certain friendship with Him; and this implies, besides love, a certain mutual return of love, together with mutual communion. . . . Now this fellowship of man with God, which consists in a certain familiar intercourse with Him, is begun here, in this life, by grace, but will be perfected in the future life, by glory; each of which things we hold by faith and hope. Therefore just as friendship with a person would be impossible if one disbelieved in, or despaired of, the possibility of his fellowship or familiar intercourse, so too, friendship with God, which is charity, is impossible without faith, so as to believe in this fellowship and intercourse with God, and to hope to attain to this fellowship. Therefore charity is altogether impossible without faith and hope.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 65, 5

19 Since good, in human acts, depends on their being regulated by the due rule, it is necessary that human virtue, which is a principle of good acts, consist in attaining the rule of human acts. Now the rule of human acts is twofold . . . , namely, human reason and God. Yet God is the first rule, by which even human reason must be regulated. Consequently the theological virtues which consist in attaining this first rule, since their object is God, are more excellent than the moral, or the intellectual virtues, which consist in attaining human reason: and it follows that among the theological virtues themselves, the first place belongs to that which attains God most.

Now that which is of itself always ranks before that which is by another. But faith and hope attain God indeed in so far as we derive from Him the knowledge of truth or the acquisition of good; but charity attains God Himself that it may rest in Him, but not that something may accrue to us from Him. Hence charity is more excellent than faith or hope, and, consequently, than all the other virtues, just as prudence, which by itself attains reason, is more excellent than the other moral virtues, which attain reason in so far as it appoints the mean in human operations of passions.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 23, 6

20 Charity . . . consists in man's loving God above all things, and subjecting himself to Him entirely, by referring all that is his to God. It is therefore of the very notion of charity that man should so love God as to wish to submit to Him in all things, and always to follow the rule of His commandments; for whatever is contrary to His commandments is manifestly contrary to charity, and therefore by its very nature is capable of destroying charity.

If indeed charity were an acquired habit dependent on the power of its subject, it would not necessarily be removed by one mortal sin, for act is directly contrary, not to habit but to act. Now the endurance of a habit in its subject does not

require the endurance of its act, so that when a contrary act supervenes, the acquired habit is not at once done away. But charity, being an infused habit, depends on the action of God Who infuses it, Who stands in relation to the infusion and preservation of charity, as the sun does to the diffusion of light in the air. . . . Consequently, just as the light would cease at once in the air, were an obstacle placed to its being lit up by the sun, even so charity ceases at once to be in the soul through the placing of an obstacle to the outpouring of charity by God into the soul.

Now it is evident that through every mortal sin which is contrary to God's commandments, an obstacle is placed to the outpouring of charity, since from the very fact that a man chooses to prefer sin to God's friendship, which requires that we should follow His will, it follows that the habit of charity is lost at once through one mortal sin.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 24, 12

21 Love of one's enemies may be understood in three ways. First, as though we were to love our enemies as enemies; this is perverse, and contrary to charity, since it implies love of that which is evil in another.

Secondly love of one's enemies may mean that we love them as to their nature, but in a universal way, and in this sense charity requires that we should love our enemies, namely, that in loving God and our neighbour, we should not exclude our enemies from the love given to our neighbour in general.

Thirdly love of one's enemies may be considered as specially directed to them, namely, that we should have a special movement of love towards our enemies. Charity does not require this absolutely, because it does not require that we should have a special movement of love to every individual man, since this would be impossible. Nevertheless charity does require this, in respect of our being prepared in mind, namely that we should be ready to love our enemies individually, if the necessity were to occur.

That man should actually do so, and love his enemy for God's sake, without it being necessary for him to do so, belongs to the perfection of charity.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 25, 8

22 "I am more fasting from being satisfied," said I, "than if I had kept silent at first, and more perplexity I amass in my mind.

How can it be that a good when shared, shall make the greater number of possessors richer in it, than if it is possessed by a few?"

And he [Virgil] to me: "Because thou dost again fix thy mind merely on things of earth, thou drawest darkness from true light.

That infinite and ineffable Good, that is on high,

- speedeth so to love as a ray of light comes to a bright body.  
As much of ardour as it finds, so much of itself doth it give, so that how far soever love extends, eternal goodness giveth increase upon it; and the more people on high who comprehend each other, the more there are to love well, and the more love is there, and like a mirror one giveth back to the other.”  
Dante, *Purgatorio*, XV, 58
- 23 Ye youth, so happy at the dawn of life,  
In whom love springs as native to your days,  
Estrange you from the world and its vain strife,  
And let your hearts their eyes to him upraise  
Who made you in his image! Give him praise,  
And think this world is but a passing show,  
Fading like blooms that all too briefly blow.  
And love ye him who on the cross did buy  
Our souls from timeless death to live for aye,  
Who died and rose and reigns in heaven high!  
Your deepest love his love will ne'er betray,  
Your faith on him I bid you safely lay;  
And since his love is best beyond compare,  
Love of the world deny with all its care.  
Chaucer, *Troilus and Cressida*, V, 263-264
- 24 The hearts of men, which fondly here admyre  
Faire seeming shewes, and feed on vaine delight,  
Transported with celestiall desyre  
Of those faire formes, may lift themselves up hyer,  
And learne to love with zealous humble dewty  
Th' Eternal Fountaine of that heavenly Beauty.  
Spenser, *Hymne of Heavenly Beautie*, 16
- 25 *Portia*. The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown;  
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;  
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
It is an attribute to God himself;  
And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,  
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy.  
Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, IV, i, 184
- 26 *Isabella*. Well, believe this,  
No ceremony that to great ones 'longs,  
Not the king's crown, nor the deputed sword,  
The marshal's truncheon, nor the judge's robe,
- Become them with one half so good a grace  
As mercy does.  
Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, II, ii, 58
- 27 *Angelo*. Your brother is a forfeit of the law.  
And you but waste your words.  
*Isabella*. Alas, alas!  
Why, all the souls that were were forfeit once;  
And He that might the vantage best have took  
Found out the remedy. How would you be,  
If He, which is the top of judgement, should  
But judge you as you are? O, think on that;  
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,  
Like man new made.  
*Ang.* Be you content, fair maid;  
It is the law, not I, condemn your brother.  
Were he my kinsman, brother, or my son,  
It should be thus with him. He must die tomorrow.  
*Isab.* To-morrow! O, that's sudden! Spare him,  
spare him!  
He's not prepared for death. Even for our kitchens  
We kill the fowl of season. Shall we serve Heaven  
With less respect than we do minister  
To our gross selves?  
Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, II, ii, 71
- 28 Cry'd Don *Quixote*, Is it for a Knight-Errant when  
he meets with People laden with Chains, and under  
Oppression, to examine whether they are in  
those Circumstances for their Crimes, or only  
thro' Misfortune? We are only to relieve the Af-  
flicted, to look on their Distress, and not on their  
Crimes.  
Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, I, 30
- 29 To forgive sin is not an act of injustice, though the  
punishment have been threatened. Even amongst  
men, though the promise of good bind the promiser;  
yet threats, that is to say, promises of evil, bind  
them not; much less shall they bind God, who is  
infinitely more merciful than men.  
Hobbes, *Leviathan*, III, 38
- 30 The infinite distance between body and mind is a  
symbol of the infinitely more infinite distance be-  
tween mind and charity; for charity is supernat-  
ural.  
Pascal, *Pensées*, XII, 793
- 31 He who lives according to the guidance of reason  
strives as much as possible to repay the hatred,  
anger, or contempt of others towards himself with  
love or generosity.  
All affects of hatred are evil, and, therefore, the  
man who lives according to the guidance of rea-  
son will strive as much as possible to keep himself  
from being agitated by the affects of hatred, and,  
consequently, will strive to keep others from being  
subject to the same affects. But hatred is increased  
by reciprocal hatred, and, on the other hand, can  
be extinguished by love, so that hatred passes into

love. Therefore he who lives according to the guidance of reason will strive to repay the hatred of another, etc., with love, that is to say, with generosity. . . .

He who wishes to avenge injuries by hating in return does indeed live miserably. But he who, on the contrary, strives to drive out hatred by love, fights joyfully and confidently, with equal ease resisting one man or a number of men, and needing scarcely any assistance from fortune. Those whom he conquers yield gladly, not from defect of strength, but from an increase of it.

Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, Prop. 46

- 32 The intellectual love of the mind towards God is the very love with which He loves Himself, not in so far as He is infinite, but in so far as He can be manifested through the essence of the human mind, considered under the form of eternity; that is to say, the intellectual love of the mind towards God is part of the infinite love with which God loves Himself. . . .

Hence it follows that God, in so far as He loves Himself, loves men, and consequently that the love of God towards men and the intellectual love of the mind towards God are one and the same thing.

Spinoza, *Ethics*, V, Prop. 36, Corol.

- 33 "Those," he [Capt. Blifil] said, "came nearer to the Scripture meaning, who understood by it [charity] candour, or the forming of a benevolent opinion of our brethren, and passing a favourable judgment on their actions; a virtue much higher, and more extensive in its nature, than a pitiful distribution of alms, which, though we would never so much prejudice, or even ruin our families, could never reach many; whereas charity, in the other and truer sense, might be extended to all mankind."

Fielding, *Tom Jones*, II, 5

- 34 Thwackum was for doing justice, and leaving mercy to heaven.

Fielding, *Tom Jones*, III, 10

- 35 It is in endeavouring to instruct mankind that we are best able to practise that general virtue which comprehends the love of all.

Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, Pref.

- 36 My uncle Toby had scarce a heart to retaliate upon a fly.

—Go—says he, one day at dinner, to an over-grown one which had buzzed about his nose, and tormented him cruelly all dinner-time,—and which after infinite attempts, he had caught at last, as it flew by him;—I'll not hurt thee, says my uncle Toby, rising from his chair, and going across the room, with the fly in his hand,—I'll not hurt a hair of thy head:—Go, says he, lifting up

the sash, and opening his hand as he spoke, to let it escape;—go, poor devil, get thee gone, why should I hurt thee?—This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me.

Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, II, 12

- 37 "—She had since that, she told me, stray'd as far as Rome, and walk'd round St. Peter's once—and return'd back—that she found her way alone across the Apennines—had travell'd over all Lombardy without money,—and through the flinty roads of Savoy without shoes—how she had borne it, and how she had got supported, she could not tell—but God tempers the wind, said Maria, to the shorn lamb."

Sterne, *Sentimental Journey*: "Maria"

- 38 He who the Ox to wrath has mov'd  
Shall never be by Woman lov'd.  
The wanton Boy that kills the Fly  
Shall feel the Spider's enmity.  
He who torments the Chafer's sprite  
Weaves a Bower in endless Night.  
The Catterpillar on the Leaf  
Repeats to thee thy Mother's grief.  
Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly  
For the Last Judgment draweth nigh.

Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*, 39

- 39 Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore  
Of nicely-calculated less or more.

Wordsworth, *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, III, 43

- 40 No love and no expression of love may, in the merely human and worldly sense, be deprived of a relationship to God. Love is a passionate emotion, but in this emotion, even before he enters into a relation with the object of his love, the man must first enter into a relationship with God, and thereby realize the claim that love is the fulfillment of the law. Love is a relation to another man or to other men, but it is by no means and dares by no means be a matrimonial, a friendly, a merely human agreement, however steadfast and tender the connection between man and man. Everyone individually before he in love enters into a relation with the beloved, with the friend, the loved ones, the contemporaries, has first to enter into a relation with God and with God's demands. As soon as one leaves out the God-relationship the questions at issue become merely human determinations of what they wish to understand by loving; what they will require of one another; and their mutual judgment because of this becomes the highest judgment. Not only the one who listens absolutely to the call of God will not belong to a woman, in order not to be delayed through wishing to please her; but also the one who in love belongs to a woman, will first and foremost belong to God; he will not seek first to please his wife, but will first endeavor to make his love pleasing unto

God. Hence it is not the wife who will teach her husband how he ought to love her, or the husband the wife, or the friend the friend, or the contemporary the contemporary, but it is God who will teach every individual how he ought to love, even if his love still only lays hold on the law referred to when the apostle says, "Love is the fulfillment of the law." This makes it quite natural that the one who has only a worldly, or a merely human conception about what love is, must come to regard that as self-love and unkindness which, understood in the Christian sense, is precisely love. When, on the other hand, the God-relationship determines what love is between man and man, then love is kept from pausing in any self-deception or illusion, while certainly the demand for self-abnegation and sacrifice is again made more infinite. The love which does not lead to God, the love which does not have this as its sole goal, to lead the lovers to love God, stops at the purely human judgment as to what love and what love's sacrifice and submission are; it stops and thereby escapes the possibility of the last and most terrifying horror of the collision: that in the love relationship there are infinite differences in the idea of what love is.

Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, I, 3A

- 41 With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace, among ourselves and with all nations.

Lincoln, *Second Inaugural Address*

- 42 "I must make you one confession," Ivan began. "I could never understand how one can love one's neighbours. It's just one's neighbours, to my mind, that one can't love, though one might love those at a distance. I once read somewhere of John the

Merciful, a saint, that when a hungry, frozen beggar came to him, he took him into his bed, held him in his arms, and began breathing into his mouth, which was putrid and loathsome from some awful disease. I am convinced that he did that from 'self-laceration,' from the self-laceration of falsity, for the sake of the charity imposed by duty, as a penance laid on him. For anyone to love a man, he must be hidden, for as soon as he shows his face, love is gone."

"Father Zossima has talked of that more than once," observed Alyosha; "he, too, said that the face of a man often hinders many people not practised in love, from loving him. But yet there's a great deal of love in mankind, and almost Christ-like love. I know that myself, Ivan."

Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, Pt. II, V, 4

- 43 *Father Zossima*. And can it be a dream, that in the end man will find his joy only in deeds of light and mercy, and not in cruel pleasures as now, in gluttony, fornication, ostentation, boasting and envious rivalry of one with the other? I firmly believe that it is not and that the time is at hand. People laugh and ask: "When will that time come and does it look like coming?" I believe that with Christ's help we shall accomplish this great thing. And how many ideas there have been on earth in the history of man which were unthinkable ten years before they appeared! Yet when their destined hour had come, they came forth and spread over the whole earth. So it will be with us, and our people will shine forth in the world, and all men will say: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone of the building."

Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, Pt. II, VI, 3

- 44 Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same.

Shaw, *Man and Superman*,  
Maxims for Revolutionists

## 3.6 | Love of Country

### PATRIOTISM

Unlike the diverse loves treated in the three preceding sections, patriotism, or love of one's country, is not a distinct type of love. It can probably be most closely aligned with the kind of love that is true friendship, the dominantly benevolent tendency which would impel a man to lay down his life for his friend. So, it is often said, the patriot too would, if necessary, lay down his life for his country.

For the most part, the writers here quoted praise patriotism as something desirable and even virtuous, while others raise doubts about its value or condemn an uncritical or blind patriotism. Dr. Johnson may have gone too far in that direction when he said that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel, but that helps to preserve a balance against the other extreme which attaches no qualifications to its praise of patriotism.

1 Go tell the Spartans, thou who passest by,  
That here obedient to their laws we lie.  
Simonides, *Epigram on Thermopylae*

2 Had the Athenians, from fear of the approaching danger, quitted their country, or had they without quitting it submitted to the power of Xerxes, there would certainly have been no attempt to resist the Persians by sea; in which case the course of events by land would have been the following. Though the Peloponnesians might have carried ever so many breastworks across the Isthmus, yet their allies would have fallen off from the Lacedæmonians, not by voluntary desertion, but because town after town must have been taken by the fleet of the barbarians; and so the Lacedæmonians would at last have stood alone, and, standing alone, would have displayed prodigies of valour and died nobly. Either they would have done thus, or else, before it came to that extremity, seeing one Greek state after another embrace the cause of the Medes, they would have come to terms with King Xerxes—and thus, either way Greece would have been brought under Persia. For I cannot understand of what possible use the walls across the Isthmus could have been, if the king had had the mastery of the sea. If then a man should now say that the Athenians were the saviours of Greece, he would not exceed the truth. For they truly held the scales; and whichever side they espoused must have carried the day. They too it was who, when they had determined to maintain the freedom of Greece, roused up that portion of the Greek na-

tion which had not gone over to the Medes; and so, next to the gods, they repulsed the invader. Even the terrible oracles which reached them from Delphi, and struck fear into their hearts, failed to persuade them to fly from Greece. They had the courage to remain faithful to their land, and await the coming of the foe.

Herodotus, *History*, VII, 139

3 *Cassandra*. The Trojans have that glory which is loveliest:  
they died for their own country.

Euripides, *Trojan Women*, 386

4 *Pericles*. There is justice in the claim that steadfastness in his country's battles should be as a cloak to cover a man's other imperfections; since the good action has blotted out the bad, and his merit as a citizen more than outweighed his demerits as an individual.

Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, II, 42

5 *Pericles*. Your country has a right to your services in sustaining the glories of her position. These are a common source of pride to you all, and you cannot decline the burdens of empire and still expect to share its honours.

Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, II, 63

6 *Alcibiades*. I hope that none of you will think any the worse of me if, after having hitherto passed as a lover of my country, I now actively join its worst enemies in attacking it, or will suspect what I say



as the fruit of an outlaw's enthusiasm. I am an outlaw from the iniquity of those who drove me forth, not, if you will be guided by me, from your service; my worst enemies are not you who only harmed your foes, but they who forced their friends to become enemies; and love of country is what I do not feel when I am wronged, but what I felt when secure in my rights as a citizen. Indeed I do not consider that I am now attacking a country that is still mine; I am rather trying to recover one that is mine no longer; and the true lover of his country is not he who consents to lose it unjustly rather than attack it, but he who longs for it so much that he will go all lengths to recover it.

Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, VI, 92

- 7 The good man should be a lover of self (for he will both himself profit by doing noble acts, and will benefit his fellows), but the wicked man should not; for he will hurt both himself and his neighbours, following as he does evil passions. For the wicked man, what he does clashes with what he ought to do, but what the good man ought to do he does; for reason in each of its possessors chooses what is best for itself, and the good man obeys his reason. It is true of the good man too that he does many acts for the sake of his friends and his country, and if necessary dies for them; for he will throw away both wealth and honours and in general the goods that are objects of competition, gaining for himself nobility; since he would prefer a short period of intense pleasure to a long one of mild enjoyment, a twelvemonth of noble life to many years of humdrum existence, and one great and noble action to many trivial ones. Now those who die for others doubtless attain this result; it is therefore a great prize that they choose for themselves.

Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1169<sup>a</sup>12

- 8 Good 'tis and fine, for fatherland to die!  
Death tracks him too who shirks; nor will He fail  
To smite the coward loins that quail,  
The coward limbs that fly!  
Horace, *Odes*, III, 2
- 9 By what sweet charm I know not the native land  
draws all men nor allows them to forget her.  
Ovid, *Epistulae Ex Ponto*, I, 3
- 10 [Sertorius] was a sincere lover of his country, and had a great desire to return home; but in his adverse fortune he showed undaunted courage, and behaved himself towards his enemies in a manner free from all dejection and mean-spiritedness; and when he was in his prosperity, and in the height of his victories, he sent word to Metellus and Pompey that he was ready to lay down his arms and live a private life if he were allowed to return home, declaring that he had rather live as the meanest citizen in Rome than, exiled from it, be

supreme commander of all other cities together.

Plutarch, *Sertorius*

- 11 A wise prince ought to adopt such a course that his citizens will always in every sort and kind of circumstance have need of the state and of him, and then he will always find them faithful.

Machiavelli, *Prince*, IX

- 12 Not because Socrates said it, but because it is really my feeling, and perhaps excessively so, I consider all men my compatriots, and embrace a Pole as I do a Frenchman, setting this national bond after the universal and common one. I am scarcely infatuated with the sweetness of my native air. Brand-new acquaintances that are wholly of my own choice seem to me to be well worth those other common chance acquaintances of the neighborhood. Friendships purely of our own acquisition usually surpass those to which community of climate or of blood binds us. Nature has put us into the world free and unfettered; we imprison ourselves in certain narrow districts, like the kings of Persia, who bound themselves never to drink any other water than that of the river Choaspes, stupidly gave up their right to use any other waters, and dried up all the rest of the world as far as they were concerned.

What Socrates did near the end of his life, in considering a sentence of exile against him worse than a sentence of death, I shall never, I think, be so broken or so strictly attached to my own country as to do. These divine lives have quite a few aspects that I embrace more by esteem than by affection. And there are also some so lofty and extraordinary that I cannot embrace them even by esteem, inasmuch as I cannot understand them. That was a very fastidious attitude for a man who considered the world his city.

Montaigne, *Essays*, III, 9, Of Vanity

- 13 *Gaunt*. This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-paradise,  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war,  
This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea,  
Which serves it in the office of a wall  
Or as a moat defensive to a house,  
Against the envy of less happier lands,  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.

Shakespeare, *Richard II*, II, i, 40

- 14 There is an honour . . . which may be ranked amongst the greatest, which happeneth rarely; that is, of such as sacrifice themselves to death or danger for the good of their country.

Bacon, *Of Honour and Reputation*

- 15 What I distinguish by the name of *virtue*, in a republic, is the love of one's country, that is, the love of equality. It is not a moral, nor a Christian, but a political *virtue*; and it is the spring which sets the republican government in motion, as honour is the spring which gives motion to monarchy.  
Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, Advertisement
- 16 Do we wish men to be virtuous? Then let us begin by making them love their country: but how can they love it, if their country be nothing more to them than to strangers, and afford them nothing but what it can refuse nobody?  
Rousseau, *Political Economy*
- 17 If children are brought up in common in the bosom of equality; if they are imbued with the laws of the State and the precepts of the general will; if they are taught to respect these above all things; if they are surrounded by examples and objects which constantly remind them of the tender mother who nourishes them, of the love she bears them, of the inestimable benefits they receive from her, and of the return they owe her, we cannot doubt that they will learn to cherish one another mutually as brothers, to will nothing contrary to the will of society, to substitute the actions of men and citizens for the futile and vain babbling of sophists, and to become in time defenders and fathers of the country of which they will have been so long the children.  
Rousseau, *Political Economy*
- 18 As soon as any man says of the affairs of the State *What does it matter to me?* the State may be given up for lost.  
Rousseau, *Social Contract*, III, 15
- 19 The [religion of the State] is good in that it unites the divine cult with love of the laws, and, making country the object of the citizens' adoration, teaches them that service done to the State is service done to its tutelary god. It is a form of theocracy, in which there can be no pontiff save the prince, and no priests save the magistrates. To die for one's country then becomes martyrdom; violation of its laws, impiety; and to subject one who is guilty to public execration is to condemn him to the anger of the gods: *Sacer est od.*  
On the other hand, it is bad in that, being founded on lies and error, it deceives men, makes them credulous and superstitious, and drowns the true cult of the Divinity in empty ceremonial. It is bad, again, when it becomes tyrannous and exclusive, and makes a people bloodthirsty and intolerant, so that it breathes fire and slaughter, and regards as a sacred act the killing of every one who does not believe in its gods. The result is to place such a people in a natural state of war with all others, so that its security is deeply endangered.  
Rousseau, *Social Contract*, IV, 8
- 20 Patriotism having become one of our topics, Johnson suddenly uttered, in a strong determined tone, an apophthegm, at which many will start: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." But let it be considered, that he did not mean a real and generous love of our country, but that pretended patriotism which so many, in all ages and countries, have made a cloak for self-interest. I maintained, that certainly all patriots were not scoundrels. Being urged, (not by Johnson,) to name one exception, I mentioned an eminent person, whom we all greatly admired. *Johnson*. "Sir, I do not say that he is *not* honest; but we have no reason to conclude from his political conduct that he is honest. Were he to accept of a place from this ministry, he would lose that character of firmness which he has, and might be turned out of his place in a year."  
Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (Apr. 7, 1775)
- 21 The more the operations of the national authority are intermingled in the ordinary exercise of government, the more the citizens are accustomed to meet with it in the common occurrences of their political life, the more it is familiarised to their sight and to their feelings, the further it enters into those objects which touch the most sensible chords and put in motion the most active springs of the human heart, the greater will be the probability that it will conciliate the respect and attachment of the community. Man is very much a creature of habit. A thing that rarely strikes his senses will generally have but little influence upon his mind. A government continually at a distance and out of sight can hardly be expected to interest the sensations of the people.  
Hamilton, *Federalist* 27
- 22 Patriotism is often understood to mean only a readiness for exceptional sacrifices and actions. Essentially, however, it is the sentiment which, in the relationships of our daily life and under ordinary conditions, habitually recognizes that the community is one's substantive groundwork and end. It is out of this consciousness, which during life's daily round stands the test in all circumstances, that there subsequently also arises the readiness for extraordinary exertions. But since men would often rather be magnanimous than law-abiding, they readily persuade themselves that they possess this exceptional patriotism in order to be sparing in the expression of a genuine patriotic sentiment or to excuse their lack of it. If again this genuine patriotism is looked upon as that which may begin of itself and arise from subjective ideas and thoughts, it is being confused with opinion, because so regarded patriotism is deprived of its true ground, objective reality.  
Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 268

23 Theirs not to make reply,  
 Theirs not to reason why,  
 Theirs but to do and die.  
 Into the valley of Death  
 Rode the six hundred.  
 Tennyson, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*

24 It has been said of old, that in a despotism there is at most but one patriot, the despot himself; and the saying rests on a just appreciation of the effects of absolute subjection, even to a good and wise master.

Mill, *Representative Government*, III

25 [The] feeling of nationality may have been generated by various causes. Sometimes it is the effect of identity of race and descent. Community of language, and community of religion, greatly contribute to it. Geographical limits are one of its causes. But the strongest of all is identity of political antecedents; the possession of a national history, and consequent community of recollections; collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past.

Mill, *Representative Government*, XVI

26 It is natural for us who were not living in those days to imagine that when half Russia had been

conquered and the inhabitants were fleeing to distant provinces, and one levy after another was being raised for the defense of the fatherland, all Russians from the greatest to the least were solely engaged in sacrificing themselves, saving their fatherland, or weeping over its downfall. The tales and descriptions of that time without exception speak only of the self-sacrifice, patriotic devotion, despair, grief, and the heroism of the Russians. But it was not really so. It appears so to us because we see only the general historic interest of that time and do not see all the personal human interests that people had. Yet in reality those personal interests of the moment so much transcend the general interests that they always prevent the public interest from being felt or even noticed. Most of the people at that time paid no attention to the general progress of events but were guided only by their private interests, and they were the very people whose activities at that period were most useful.

Those who tried to understand the general course of events and to take part in it by self-sacrifice and heroism were the most useless members of society, they saw everything upside down, and all they did for the common good turned out to be useless and foolish.

Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, XII, 4