

Second Series III

Love Hopes All Things—and Yet Is Never Put to Shame

Patricia Maitland Edition · Provisional AI-assisted translation

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Before you read

Editorial introduction; not part of Kierkegaard's text.

Kierkegaard asks what it means for love to hope all things—and how such hope can avoid humiliation when appearances or outcomes seem to refute it. Hope is not optimism about events. Love keeps open the possibility of the good for another person, even to the last moment, because possibility belongs to eternity rather than to worldly calculation.

The discourse contrasts love with despair, shrewdness, resentment, envy and the desire to be proved right. Its final claim is exacting: honour or shame does not depend upon whether an expectation comes true, but upon the expectation itself. The loving person may be mocked in time, yet is not put to shame in eternity.

1 Corinthians 13:7. Love hopes all things.

Read the English translation

¶ 1

Through many images and by means of many representations, holy Scripture seeks in various ways to lend this earthly existence of ours festivity and solemnity, to bring air and outlook through the relation to the eternal. And this is indeed necessary. For when the worldliness of earthly life, God-forsaken, closes itself in upon itself in self-satisfaction, then this confined air generates poison within itself and from itself. And when, within temporality, time in a certain sense creeps along so slowly and yet so deceptively swift, that one never, with concentrated attention, becomes aware of its disappearance; or when the moment fixes itself and comes to a standstill, when everything—everything—is mustered to direct mind and powers into the moment: then the outlook is lost, and this severed, God-forsaken moment of temporality, whether it be shorter or longer, becomes a falling away from the eternal. That is why, in different ages, the need has so often been felt for a refreshing, reviving breath of air, a mighty gust, that could cleanse the air and drive away the poisonous vapours, the need has been felt for the saving movement of a great event, which saves by moving what stands still, the need has been felt for the reviving outlook of a great expectation— so that one may not be suffocated in worldliness or perish in the burdensome moment.

¶ 2

Yet Christianity knows only one way and one way out, while nevertheless it always knows a way and a way out; it is by means of the eternal, that Christianity brings air and outlook at every moment. When busyness increases, precisely because the moment spreads out, when it ceaselessly rushes about within the moment, which, understood eternally, does not get anywhere, when the busy sow and reap and sow again and reap once more (for busyness harvests many times), when the busy gather their barns full with what they harvested and rest on their merits— alas, while the one who, who in truth wills the good, in the course of that same time still sees not the least fruit of his labour, and he becomes an object of ridicule as one who does not know how to sow, as one who labours in vain and merely beats the air: then Christianity brings an outlook through its figurative speech about, that this earthly life is seedtime, eternity the time of harvest. When the moment, precisely because it stands still, becomes like a whirlpool (for a whirlpool does not move forwards), when there is strife, there is victory and defeat and there is victory again, now at one point, now at another— but the one, who wills the good in truth, is the only one, who alone is the loser and losing everything, so it seems: then Christianity opens a prospect by means of its figurative speech about, that this life belongs to tribulation, belongs to strife, eternity belongs to victory. when the moment comes to a standstill in the wretched entanglement of pettiness, which nevertheless sneeringly reproduces even what is holiest, the good, the true in its wretched diminishment, sneeringly plays the game of distributing honour and shame; when everything is emptied of meaning by being dragged

down into this wretched, confused turmoil: then Christianity brings air and opens a prospect, gives life solemnity and festivity by pointing in figurative speech to that scene of eternity, where it shall be eternally decided, who won the crown of honour, and who was put to shame. —What solemn and earnest festivity! truly, what indeed are honour and shame, if the setting is not secured, which gives honour and shame infinite significance! even if it were deserved, that a person won honour here in the world, how much solemnity does the world possess with which to give it significance! let the pupil deservedly be put to shame, or deservedly be honoured —if the solemn ceremony were to take place on the staircase; if the teacher, who distributes honour and shame, were a wretched fellow; if no one, or practically no one, had been invited from among those venerable persons, who honour the festivity with their presence, but an all the greater crowd of disreputable people, whose reputation was itself dubious: what then are honour and shame! but eternity! do you know any festal building, vaulted as high as eternity; do you know anything, even any house of God, where there is this holy silence as in eternity; do you know any, even the most select circle of venerable people, that is so safeguarded against, that no one is present, against whom honour could have the slightest, the very slightest objection, so safeguarded against, that no one is present except those from whom honour itself derives honour, as eternity is; do you know any festal hall, even if all its walls were made of mirror-glass, which thus reflects infinitely and honour's demand alone, so infinitely denies even the slightest, the most unnoticed crack in which dishonour might hide, as eternity does— if there you were to stand put to shame!

¶ 3

Thus Christianity opens up with regard to honour and shame at every moment a prospect by means of eternity, if you yourself are willing to help by hoping. Christianity does not lead you up to some slightly higher place, from which you can still survey only a slightly wider circumference: this is, after all, only an earthly hope and a worldly prospect. No: Christianity's hope is eternity, and therefore there are light and shadow, beauty and truth, and above all the distance needed for penetrating vision in its depiction of existence. Christianity's hope is eternity, and Christ is the way; his humiliation is the way, but even when he ascended into heaven he was the way.

¶ 4

But love, which is greater than faith and hope, also takes up hope's work, or takes hope itself upon itself, the act of hoping for others, as a work of love. It is itself built up and nourished by this hope of eternity, and then also acts lovingly towards others in this hope, which we shall now consider:

¶ 5

Love hopes all things—and yet is never put to shame,

¶ 6

for truly not everyone, who hopes all things, is therefore the loving person, nor is everyone, who hopes all things, therefore safeguarded against ever being put to shame; but lovingly to hope all things is the opposite of, in despair, hoping absolutely nothing, whether for oneself or for others.

¶ 7

To hope all things, or, what is the same, always to hope. Admittedly, at first glance it seems as if hoping all things were something that could be done once for all, since “all” gathers the manifold into one, and, in so far, into what one must call an eternal moment, as if hope were at rest, in repose. Yet this is not so. Hoping is composed of the eternal and the temporal, and from this it follows that the expression of hope’s task in the form of eternity is to hope all things, in the form of temporality, always to hope. Neither expression is truer than the other; on the contrary, each expression becomes untrue when it is set against the other, instead of the two together expressing the same thing: at every moment, always to hope all things.

¶ 8

Hope relates to what is to come, to possibility, which in turn, unlike actuality, is always twofold, the possibility of progress or regress, of rising again or going under, the possibility of good or evil. The eternal “is”; but when the eternal touches the temporal or is within the temporal, the two do not meet in the “present”, for then the present itself would be the eternal. The present—the moment— passes so quickly, that it does not really exist, it is merely the boundary, and is therefore already past, whereas the past is what was present. Therefore, when the eternal is within the temporal, it is in what is to come (for it cannot get hold of the present, and the past is, of course, past) or in possibility. The past is the actual; what is to come, the possible; eternally, the eternal is the eternal; in time, the eternal is the possible— what is to come. That is why we call tomorrow “what is to come”, but eternal life too we call “what is to come”. The possible, as such, is always twofold, and within possibility the eternal relates without distinction to its twofoldness. From the other side, when the person whom the possible concerns, relates without distinction to possibility’s twofoldness, we then say: he expects. Expectation contains within itself the same twofoldness that possibility has, and to expect is to relate oneself to possibility purely and simply as such. At that point the relation divides, according to what the expectant person chooses. To relate oneself expectantly to the possibility of good is to hope, which for that very reason cannot be any temporal expectation, but is an eternal hope. To relate oneself expectantly to the possibility of evil is to fear. But both the one who hopes and the one who fears are expectant. But as soon as the choice has been made, possibility is changed, for the possibility of good is the eternal. It is only at the moment of contact that possibility’s twofoldness is without distinction; in the decision to choose hope one therefore decides infinitely more than it appears, for it is an eternal decision.

Only in bare possibility, then, for the merely or indifferently expectant person are the possibilities of good and evil without distinction; in the differentiation (and choice, of course, differentiates) the possibility of good is more than possibility, for it is the eternal. Hence it follows that the one who hopes can never be deceived; for to hope is to expect the possibility of good, but the possibility of good is the eternal.

¶ 9

Thus we must define more precisely what it is to hope; for in ordinary usage people often call something hope which is by no means hope, but wish, longing, yearning expectation now for one thing, now for another, in short, an expectant person's relation to the possibility of the manifold. Understood in this way (when hope really means only expectation) hope then comes so easily to the young person and the child, because the young person and the child are themselves still a possibility. And conversely, it is only to be expected when one sees how, as the years pass, more often than not, possibility and hope diminish in people, or rather, the sense of possibility. This in turn explains why experience speaks so dismissively of hope, as if it were nothing but youthfulness (which, admittedly, the hope of child and young person also is), as if hoping were, like dancing, some youthful thing, for which the older person has neither inclination nor facility. Well, yes, hoping does indeed also mean making oneself light with the help of the eternal, that is, with the help of the possibility of good. And though the eternal is far from being youthfulness, it nevertheless has far more in common with youthfulness than with the sullenness that is often enough honoured with the name of earnestness, the sluggishness of years, which, in reasonably fortunate circumstances, is more or less content and settled, but above all has nothing to do with hope; and in adverse circumstances would rather gnaw resentfully than hope. In youth a person has expectation and possibility in abundance, it develops of itself in the young person like precious myrrh, dripping down from the trees of Arabia. But when a person has grown older, then, more often than not, that person's life becomes whatever it has somehow happened to become, a sluggish repetition and rewording of the same thing; no possibility startles it awake, no possibility revives it with rejuvenating life; hope becomes something that has a home nowhere, and possibility becomes something as rare as greenery in winter. People live without the eternal with the help of habit, prudence, imitation, experience, custom and convention. And truly, take all this, stir it together, prepare it over the dulled or merely earth-flaring fire of the passions, and you shall see: you can get all manner of things out of it— a variously prepared viscous slime that people call “life-prudence”; but no one has ever got possibility out of it— possibility, this marvel, which is so infinitely delicate (indeed, not even spring's finest stem is so delicate!), so infinitely fragile (indeed, not even the finest woven linen is so fragile!) and yet brought into being precisely, formed with the help of the eternal, and yet stronger than everything— if it is the possibility of good!

¶ 10

People think they are speaking from experience when they divide a person's life into certain periods and ages, and then call the first period the period of hope or possibility. What folly! For in that case one leaves out from one's talk of hope the eternal altogether, and yet one speaks of hope. But how is that possible, since hope is, after all, related to the possibility of good, and thereby to the eternal! And on the other hand, how is it possible to speak of hope in such a way that one assigns it to a particular age; surely the eternal extends throughout the whole of life, and so there is and must be hope until the very end; and so there is no age that belongs to hope alone; rather, one's whole life must be the time of hope. People therefore think they are speaking from experience about hope— by abolishing the eternal. Just as, in a play, by shortening time and condensing events, within a few hours one sees the content of several years: so people would, in theatrical fashion, arrange their lives within temporality. One rejects God's design for existence: that temporality is wholly and entirely the development, the complication— and eternity the resolution; instead, people arrange the whole thing within temporality: they allot twenty years to the development, then ten years to the complication, then for a few years they tighten the knot and then comes the resolution. Admittedly, death is indeed also a resolution; and then it is over, one is buried— though not before the dissolution of decay has taken place. But truly, anyone who will not understand that their whole life must be the time of hope is in despair— regardless, utterly regardless, of whether they know it or not, whether they count themselves happy in their supposed prosperity, or drag themselves through boredom and trouble. Anyone who gives up the possibility that their existence in the next moment could be forfeited— unless they give up this possibility because they hope for the possibility of good— thus anyone who lives without possibility is in despair; they break with the eternal, they arbitrarily close possibility off, without eternity's consent they set an end, where the end is not, instead of being like someone who writes at another's dictation, always keeping the pen ready for what comes next, so that they do not presume senselessly to put a full stop before the sentence is finished, or rebelliously to throw the pen away.

¶ 11

When one wants to help a child with a very great task, how does one go about it? Well, one does not set the whole task before the child all at once, for then the child despairs and gives up hope; one gives the child a little piece at a time, but always enough that the child never comes to a halt, as though it were finished, yet not so much that the child cannot manage it. This is education's pious deception; it does, in truth, conceal something; if the child is deceived, then that is because the educator is human and cannot answer for the next moment. But now, eternity— it is surely the greatest task set before a human being, and, on the other hand, it can surely answer for the next moment; and the child of temporality—the human being— stands, after all, only as a little child before the infinite task. If eternity were all at once and in its own language to set the task before the human

being, without regard for human comprehension and weak powers, the human being would have to despair. But here is the marvel: that this greatest power, eternity, can make itself so small that it can be divided in this way— though eternally it is one— that, clothing itself in the form of what is to come, the possible, with the help of hope educates the child of temporality—the human being— teaches that child to hope (for hoping is the very instruction, the relation to the eternal), unless the person arbitrarily chooses to be sternly cowed with the help of fear, or boldly chooses to despair, that is, to withdraw from possibility's education. In possibility, the eternal sets before one properly understood, always only a small piece at a time. Through the possible, eternity is always *near* enough to be at hand and yet *far* enough away to keep the human being moving forwards towards the eternal— on the way, making progress. Thus eternity entices and draws a human being through possibility from cradle to grave, provided that person chooses to hope. For possibility is, as stated, double, and precisely for that reason it is true education; possibility is just as strict, or can at least be just as strict, as it can be gentle. hope does not simply lie within possibility, for fear may also lie within possibility. But the one who chooses hope is educated by possibility with the help of hope to hope. Yet fear's possibility— strictness— remains hidden there as a possibility, should it, for education's sake, in order to awaken, prove necessary, but it remains hidden, while the eternal entices with the help of hope. For to entice is always to be as *near* as *far*, whereby the one who hopes is kept always hoping, hoping all things, kept in hope for the eternal, which in temporality is the possible.

¶ 12

So it is with hoping all things. But *lovingly to hope all things* denotes the loving person's relation to other human beings: in relation to them, hoping for them, always holds possibility open with infinite partiality for the possibility of good. Thus the loving person hopes, that at every moment there is possibility— the possibility of good for the other person, and this possibility of good may mean ever more glorious progress in the good, from perfection to perfection; or being raised after a fall; or rescue from perdition, and so on.

¶ 13

That the loving person is right that at every moment there is possibility is easily seen. Ah, but many might understand it far more easily if we were to let despair say the same— for, in a certain sense, despair says the same thing. The person in despair also *knows* what lies within possibility, and yet gives up possibility (for giving up possibility is precisely to despair), or, more precisely, brazenly dares to *assume* the impossibility of good. Here again it becomes evident that the possibility of good is more than possibility; for when someone dares to *assume* the impossibility of good, then possibility itself disappears for that person. The person who fears does not *assume* the impossibility of good; that person

fears the possibility of evil, but does not draw a conclusion, does not dare to assume the impossibility of good.

¶ 14

“It is possible,” says despair, “it is possible that even the most sincere enthusiast might nevertheless one day grow weary, give up the striving and sink into the service of wretchedness; it is possible that even the most inward believer might nevertheless one day let go of faith and choose unbelief; it is possible that even the most ardent love might one day grow cold, indeed, freeze solid; it is possible, that even the most upright person might nevertheless go astray and be lost; it is possible that even the best friend might be transformed into an enemy, even the most faithful wife into a perjurer: it is possible; therefore despair, give up hope, above all, do not hope in any person or for any person.”— Yes, certainly it is possible, but then the opposite is also possible. “Therefore never, unlovingly, give up on any person or give up hope for them, for it was nevertheless possible that even the most utterly lost son might nevertheless be saved; that the most embittered enemy, ah, he who was your friend— it is nevertheless possible that he might become your friend again; it is nevertheless possible that the person who sank deepest, ah, because he stood so high, it is nevertheless possible that he might be raised up again; it is nevertheless possible that the love which grew cold might come to burn again: therefore never give up on any person, not even at the final moment, do not despair, no, hope all things.”

¶ 15

Thus, “it is possible”— this much the person in despair and the loving person agree upon; but then they part eternally, for despair hopes nothing at all for others, while love hopes all things. Despair collapses in upon itself and now sometimes uses possibility as an entertaining stimulant, if anyone can take pleasure in the fickle, empty, ghostlike flare of possibility. Remarkably enough, this shows how deeply hope is grounded in a human being: precisely among people who have frozen in despair, one finds a prevailing inclination to fool about and flirt with possibility— a voluptuous misuse of the imagination. Coldly and defiantly, the person in despair will not hope in relation to the other person, still less work for the possibility of good within that person; yet it entertains the person in despair to let the other person’s fate stage a deceptive spectacle before them in possibility, whether it is hope’s possibility or fear’s, it entertains them to play with the other person’s fate, to imagine now the one now the other possibility, to toss that person, as it were, into the air, while the despairing person, proudly and unlovingly, despises the whole thing.

¶ 16

Yet by what right do we call someone a person in despair who gives up on another person? It is one thing, indeed, to despair oneself, another, to despair over another person. Ah, yes, but if it is nevertheless true what the loving person understands, and if it

is true that one, if one is the loving person, understands what the loving person understands— that at every moment there is the possibility of good for the other person— then giving up on another person as hopelessly lost, as though there were no hope for that person, is proof that one is not oneself the loving person; and therefore one is indeed the person in despair, the one who gives up possibility. No one can hope without also being loving; one cannot hope for oneself without also being loving, for the good is infinitely interconnected; but if one is loving, then one also hopes for others. And to the same degree as one hopes for oneself, to precisely the same degree one hopes for others; for precisely to the degree that one hopes for oneself, to precisely the same degree one is the loving person. And to the same degree as one hopes for others, to precisely the same degree one hopes for oneself; for this is the infinitely exact, eternal like for like that belongs to everything eternal. Oh, there is everywhere, where love is present, something so infinitely profound. The truly loving person says: “Hope all things; give up on no one, for to give up on that person is to give up your love for them— if, that is, you do not give it up, then you hope; but if you give up your love for them, then you yourself cease to be the loving person.” See: generally, we speak in another way, in a domineering and unloving way about our relationship to the love within us, as though one were oneself lord and absolute ruler over one’s love in the same sense as one is over one’s money. When someone says, “I have given up my love for this person,” so the speaker thinks, that it is this person who loses, this person, who was the object of the speaker’s love; the speaker himself thinks that he retains his love, in the same sense as when someone who has supported another person financially, says: “I have stopped giving that person this support,” and so the giver now keeps the money, which the other person previously received, that person, who is the one who loses; for the giver is certainly far from losing through this redistribution of money. But it is not so with love; perhaps the person does lose who was the object of that love, but the one who has “given up his love for this person,” is the one who loses; perhaps he does not notice it himself; perhaps he does not even notice that language mocks him, for, after all, he says, “I have given up my love.” But if he has given up his love, then he has indeed ceased to be loving. To be sure, he adds my love “for this person,” but this does not help, in that way it can be done without loss to oneself with money, but not with love. The adjective “loving” does not apply to me when I have given up my love for “this person,” alas, although I may even have imagined that the other person was the one who lost. And so it is also with this: to despair over another person— is oneself to be in despair. Yes, it is somewhat delaying, this consideration; unfortunately, it goes so lightly and so easily to despair over another person— and then supposedly to be secure about oneself, full of hope for oneself; and precisely those people who, enjoying their own self-satisfaction, are most secure about themselves, are generally the very quickest to despair over others. But however easy it may be, it nevertheless cannot truly be done— except in thoughtlessness, which, admittedly, comes most easily to many people. No: here again is eternity’s like for like: to despair over another person is oneself to be in despair.

For the loving person hopes all things. And it is true what the loving person says: that, so far as he can understand, even in the final moment there remains the possibility of good, even for the person most completely lost, and therefore still hope. It is true, and it will be true for everyone in their relationship to other people, provided one keeps one's imagination at rest, undisturbed and unclouded by unloving passions, with the eternal focus upon eternity's reflection in possibility. Therefore, when someone cannot understand what the loving person understands, it must be because that person is not the loving person; it must be because there is something which prevents him from keeping possibility pure (for if possibility is kept pure, then everything is possible), while he lovingly chooses the possibility of the good or hopes for the other person; it must be, because there is something, which weighs him down and inclines him to expect the other person's dejection, downfall, perdition. This weight is the earthly passions of the worldly—and therefore unloving—mind; for worldliness is heavy in itself, burdensome, sluggish, sluggish, dispirited, out of temper, and cannot engage with possibility, least of all with the possibility of the good, neither for its own sake nor for another's sake. — There is a kind of shrewdness which, almost proud of it, believes it has a particularly thorough knowledge of the shabby side of existence, that everything ends, after all, in wretchedness: how could it, even at the last moment lovingly hope for another person, it, which, early in the day already, begins to expect and prepares itself for his downfall! — There are anger and bitterness, even if it does not have a murder on its conscience, it nevertheless gives up the person it hates as hopeless, and so deprives him of possibility; but is this not to kill him spiritually, to plunge him spiritually into the abyss — so far as anger and bitterness have it in their power! — There is an evil eye: how could an evil eye lovingly catch sight of the possibility of the good! — There is envy: it is quick to give up on a person, and yet, it does not really let him go at all, as though it released him, no, it is early on the scene, to lend a hand in his downfall. And once his downfall is certain, then envy hurries home to its gloomy corner and calls to its still more loathsome relation, called malicious joy, so that the two may rejoice together — to their own harm. — There is a cowardly, fearful small-mindedness, which has lacked the courage to hope for anything for itself, how could it hope for the possibility of the good for others; for that it is too small-minded, and too closely related to envy. — There is a worldly, vain mind which would simply die of shame and disgrace if it should live to discover that it was mistaken, to be made a fool of, to become ridiculous (the most dreadful of all terrors!) because it had hoped for another person for something that did not happen. Thus this worldly, vain mind safeguards itself by hoping for nothing in good time, and regards lovingly hoping all things as infinitely foolish and infinitely ridiculous. But here the world's vanity is mistaken, for whatever is foolish is never infinite; that was precisely the consolation of the person who, while he lived, had to endure more than enough of the world's foolishness, that he could always say: infinite it is not, after all; no—God be praised— it comes to an end. Nor is experience right in claiming that the wisest course is not to hope

all things for another person— and yet, of course, experience is right: otherwise it would have to revise its lesson and learn how foolish it is to love others for the sake of one's own advantage; and only insofar as one does so is it unwise to hope all things.

¶ 18

But when all this— this shrewdness, this anger and bitterness, this envy, malicious joy, this cowardly, fearful small-mindedness, this worldly, vain mind— when all this or any part of it is present in a person, and to the degree that it is present, love is absent, and is present in him to that degree less. But if there is less love in him, there is also less of the eternal in him; and if there is less of the eternal in him, there is also less possibility, less sense of possibility (for possibility arises precisely in this way: the eternal touches within time, the eternal in the human being, but if there is nothing eternal in this human being, then the touch of the eternal is in vain, no possibility arises); but if there is less possibility, there is also less hope, precisely because, just as there is less love, that could lovingly hope for the possibility of the good. But the loving person hopes all things; no sluggishness of habit, no narrowness of understanding, no hairsplitting subtlety of shrewdness, no reckonings amassed by experience, no hesitancy born of years, no bitterness of evil passions corrupt his hope or distort possibility for him; each morning—indeed, each moment— he renews his hope and refreshes possibility, while love abides, and he abides in it.

¶ 19

Even if the loving person could do nothing else at all for others, could bring no other gift whatsoever: he still brings the best gift, he brings hope. Where everything seems so full of hope and so rich in expectation for the promising young man, there too love brings the best gift, hope; but also where, where people have long believed that they endured to the utmost, there too love hopes to the utmost, indeed, until the »last day«, for only then is hope at an end. Have you seen a physician going about among the sick, you will surely have noticed that the best gift he brings, better than every medicine, and all his care, is that he brings hope, when it is said, »the physician hopes«. Yet a physician deals only with the temporal, and so it must happen again and again that the moment comes when it would be untruthful for him to deny that he has given up on the sick person, that the sickness is unto death. But the loving person— what joy for the loving person: that he may always hope; what joy for him, that eternity assures him that there is always hope. For the loving person does not hope— the truly loving person— because eternity guarantees it to him; rather, he hopes because he is loving, and he thanks eternity that he may hope. And so he always brings the best gift, better than congratulations on the greatest happiness, better than all human help in the greatest misfortune, for hope— the possibility of the good— is eternity's help. When every misfortune came upon humankind, hope nevertheless remained. On this, paganism and Christianity agree: but the difference is this— and it is infinite: Christianity has an infinitely lower estimate of all these

misfortunes, and an infinitely more blessed conception of hope. But hope— the hope that remained— remained only with the loving person. If love did not exist, hope would not exist either; it would lie there like a letter waiting to be collected; if there were no love, hope would be like a letter whose contents were— indeed, blessed— but with no one to deliver the letter. Then love— which, after all, is greater than hope— took it upon itself as its service and as its task to bring hope.

¶ 20

Yet there is nothing obscure, nothing unclear in this whole reflection such that one cannot quite make out what the subject is, for »love hopes all things« may mean that the loving person hopes all things for himself, and it may mean that the loving person lovingly hopes all things for others? But these are indeed one and the same, and this obscurity is precisely the clarity of the eternal, if anyone fully understands that it is wholly one and the same. So long as love hopes all things (and Paul does not say that hope hopes all things, but that love hopes all things, precisely because— as he says— love is greater than hope), then it follows from this (from the fact that it is love, and from what love is), that the loving person hopes all things for others, because his love conditions his hope for himself. Only earthly understanding— whose clarity is surely hardly to be praised— only earthly understanding, which understands neither what love nor what hope is— supposes that they are two entirely different things: hoping for oneself and hoping for others, while love, in turn, is a third thing in its own right. Earthly understanding supposes that one can perfectly well hope for oneself without hoping for others; and therefore does not need love in order to hope for oneself, whereas one does need love in order to hope for others— for the beloved; for why should one hope for anyone beyond them? Earthly understanding fails to notice that love is by no means a third thing in its own right, but is the mediating determination: without love, no hope for oneself; with love, hope for all others; to the same degree as one hopes for oneself, to the same degree one hopes for others; for to that same degree one is loving.

¶ 21

Blessed is the loving person: he hopes all things; even in the final moment he hopes for the possibility of the good for the one most utterly lost. The loving person has learned this from eternity, but only because he was loving could he learn from eternity, and only because he was loving could he learn this from eternity. Woe to the one who, in relation to another person, gave up hope and possibility; woe to him, for in doing so he himself lost love.

¶ 22

Love hopes all things— and yet is never put to shame. When we speak of hope and expectation, we speak of being put to shame; by this we mean that someone is put to shame when his hope or expectation is not fulfilled. In what, then, is the shame to lie? Presumably in this: that one's calculating prudence has failed to calculate correctly, that it

(to one's shame) becomes apparent that one has foolishly miscalculated. But good Lord, that shame was surely not so very dangerous; surely, too, it is really only so in the eyes of the world, whose conception of honour and shame one should not, however, take pride in adopting. For that which the world admires most and alone accords honour, is prudence, or acting prudently; but to act prudently is precisely the most contemptible thing of all. Whether a person is prudent, in a certain sense, he cannot help it himself; that he develops his prudence, nor should he be ashamed of that; but all the more of acting prudently. And it is certain (something especially necessary to say in these prudent times, when prudence has really become that which must be overcome with Christianity's help, just as coarseness and savagery once were), if people do not learn to despise acting prudently, just as deeply as one despises stealing bearing false witness: then in the end one abolishes the eternal altogether, and with it everything that is holy and worthy of honour— for this: to act prudently, is precisely, through one's whole life, to bear false witness against the eternal, is precisely to steal one's existence from God. For acting prudently is half-heartedness, by which one undeniably gets furthest in the world, wins the world's goods and advantages, the world's honour, because the world and worldly advantage amount to, understood eternally, half-heartedness. But neither has the eternal ever nor Holy Scripture taught anyone to strive to get far, or furthest, in the world, on the contrary, Scripture warns us not to get too far in the world, so that, if possible, one may keep oneself undefiled by the world. But if this is the relation, then it seems not commendable to aspire to get furthest, or even far, in the world.

¶ 23

If, then, one is truly to speak of being put to shame in relation to hope and expectation, then the shame must lie deeper, lie in what one hopes for, so that, essentially, one is equally put to shame, whether one's hope is fulfilled or not; The only difference, then, will be that, when the hope is not fulfilled, perhaps in one's bitterness and despair, it becomes manifest how firmly one clung to what one had been ashamed to hope for. Had the hope been fulfilled, then this might not have become manifest, yet the shame would nevertheless essentially have remained the same.

¶ 24

Yet if one hopes for something which one is ashamed to hope for, regardless of whether it is fulfilled or not, then one is not really hoping. It is a misuse of the noble word 'hope' to connect it with anything of that kind, for to hope is essentially and eternally related to the good— and so one can never be put to shame through hope.

¶ 25

One can (to use the false expression for a moment) be put to shame by hoping for one earthly advantage or another— when it then fails to materialise. But the shame is not really this: that it did not come, that one's hope was not fulfilled; the shame is this: if, because expectation has been disappointed, it becomes apparent how important such an

earthly advantage was to one. This, therefore, is not hoping either: it is wishing, desiring, expecting— and therefore one can be put to shame.— One can be put to shame by giving up hope for another person— when it then turns out that he was saved after all, or perhaps even that it was merely our imagination that pictured his ruin. Here one is truly put to shame, because it is in itself a dishonour to give up on another person, whatever the outcome may be.— One can be put to shame by hoping for evil to befall another person— when it turns out that everything turns to the good for him. The vengeful person sometimes says that he hopes to God that vengeance will surely strike the hated one. But truly, this is not hoping: it is hating; it is brazen to call it hope; it is blasphemy to want to make God his fellow-worker in hatred. The vengeful person, therefore, is not put to shame because what he expects does not happen, as he expected; rather, he is and was put to shame, whatever may happen.

¶ 26

But the loving person hopes all, and yet is never put to shame. Scripture speaks of a hope that shall not be put to shame. By this Scripture means first and foremost the hope that concerns the one who hopes, his hope for the forgiveness of sins, and one day to be saved, his hope for a blessed reunion with whatever death or life separated from him. And only in relation to this hope, which is hope itself, could there then be any question of being put to shame; for truly one was not in itself ashamed to have this hope, but, on the contrary, an honour; and so it might seem that shame would come if the hope were not fulfilled. So consistent with itself is Holy Scripture's usage: it does not call every sort of expectation, expectation of the manifold, hope; it knows only one hope: hope itself, the possibility of the good, and of this hope, the only one that could be put to shame, because to have it is an honour— Scripture says that it shall not be put to shame.

¶ 27

Yet when the loving person's hope is for another person, was it not then possible that the loving person could be put to shame— when this hope was not fulfilled? Is it not possible that a person could be eternally lost? But if the loving person had hoped all, hoped for the possibility of the good for this person, then surely his hope put him to shame.

¶ 28

How so! If the prodigal son had died in his sins, and thus been laid in the grave in shame— and the father, who even at the final moment hoped all, stood beside him to help: did he then stand put to shame? I thought it was the son who bore the shame, the son who brought shame upon the father— but then the father must have the honour, for it is impossible to bring shame upon one who is himself put to shame. Ah, the anxious father is surely thinking least of all about honour; yet truly he nevertheless stood with honour! If, beyond the grave, there were no salvation for the prodigal son, if he were eternally lost— and the father, who, for as long as he lived, had continued to hope for all things, even in his final hour still hoped all things: did he then stand put to shame in

eternity? In eternity! No, eternity, after all, has its own conception of honour and shame; eternity cannot even comprehend, it casts out from itself as something dishonourable, the cleverness that wants to talk only about whether one's expectation was fulfilled, without considering at all what kind of expectation it was. In eternity everyone will be compelled to understand that it is not the outcome that determines honour or shame, but the expectation in itself. In eternity, therefore, it is precisely the unloving person who may nevertheless have been proved right in the petty, envious and hateful things he expected of another human being, he will be put to shame— even though his expectation was fulfilled. But honour belongs to the one who loves. And in eternity there will be no bustling talk about how he was mistaken after all— perhaps that too was a mistake: to enter blessedness. No, in eternity there is only one mistake: to find oneself together with one's fulfilled petty, envious and hateful expectations, excluded from blessedness. And in eternity no mockery will wound the one who loves, for having been foolish enough to make himself ridiculous by hoping all things; for in eternity the mocker's cry is not heard, still less than in the grave, because in eternity only the voices of the blessed are heard. And in eternity no envy will touch the crown of honour which the one who loves bears with honour, no: envy cannot reach so far, however far it may reach elsewhere, it cannot reach from hell to paradise.

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