

The Art of Sprezzatura: Effortless Application of Doctrine; Thieme: Essentials & Nonessentials; Two Kinds of Love; 1 Jn 1:1-3

“The Art of Sprezzatura”:

1. This word is of Italian derivation but found in English dictionaries. Here are some samples:

Merriam-Webster Online Unabridged Dictionary:

Sprat-tsä-tü'-rä: Studied nonchalance: perfect conduct or performance of something (as an artistic endeavor) without apparent effort.

The New Oxford American Dictionary, s.v.:

Studied carelessness, especially as a characteristic quality or style of art or literature.

Wikipedia.org:

Sprezzatura is an Italian term meaning the expression of aristocratic attitude. The Mona Lisa is a classic example of sprezzatura. The sprezzatura of the Mona Lisa is seen in both her smile and the positioning of her hands. Both the smile and hands are intended to convey her grandeur, self-confidence and societal position. Leonardo da Vinci was a master at capturing not only the physical likeness, but also the subject's attitude: the sprezzatura.

Sprezzatura is a complicated word that first finds its origins in Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*. Its basic meaning within the book pertains to the art of concealing (skill). The courtiers of the day did not think that any activity or goal was worth doing or having if the effort to do or to have it was obvious. As the character Count Ludovico says in Castiglione's *Book*, "It is an art which does not seem to be an art. One must avoid affectation and practice in all things a certain sprezzatura ... so as to ... make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it ... obvious effort is the antithesis of grace."

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sprezzatura>

21. This establishes fellowship between believers. Therefore, we are able to distinguish between true fellowship with God and Christian fellowship.
22. Fellowship with God is established by rebound: confession alone to God alone. Fellowship continues through the filling of the Holy Spirit and enhanced through spiritual growth. It is brought to completion when the believer advances in his spiritual growth to the point that he shares the happiness of God.
23. Christian fellowship is a by-product that occurs when two or more believers in fellowship with God enjoy interpersonal relationships while applying the problem-solving device of unconditional love.
24. Until unconditional love is mastered there is always the potential that Christian fellowship will malfunction. Therefore, Christian fellowship can never function properly until fellowship with God has been utilized to the point that the believers involved can consistently apply the problem-solving device of personal love for Him.
25. Christian fellowship is therefore dependent upon fellowship with God and the problem-solving device of personal love for God.
26. If Christian fellowship is to be a beneficial experience then the principle of unconditional love becomes an imperative.

27. Christian fellowship can develop into personal love for others but it is dependent upon unconditional love. Defining and comparing these two types of love involve a number of principles on fellowship and for these we turn to:

Thieme, R. B., Jr. *The Integrity of God*. 4th ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2005), 235-39:

Essentials and Nonessentials.

We are required by the [honor] code to avoid some things and practice others. With reference to ourselves we must avoid arrogance which appears under pressure in the form of self-pity and under prosperity in the form of self-righteousness.

With reference to others we must know the difference between essentials and nonessentials. We are to be absolutely inflexible on the essentials of life, but when some nonessential is at stake, we should be as flexible as necessary. Thus we avoid pettiness, self-righteousness, and judging while permitting other believers the freedom to live their own lives before the Lord.

We are not called upon to change or reform others; Bible doctrine renovates—from the inside out (Romans. 12:2)! (p. 235)

The honor code demands more of the strong than of the weak. Toleration under the honor code means live and let live as unto the Lord.

Now we the strong [mature believers] are obligated [under the honor code] to keep bearing the weaknesses of the weak and not to accommodate ourselves. (Romans. 15:1, corrected translation)
(p. 236)

The mature believer can be flexible because he knows that in due time the continued intake of doctrine will bring the immature believer into line with the truth. All the mature believer must do when faced with an overzealous, undertaught new believer is recall how many people tolerated his own half-formed ideas while he was growing spiritually! (pp. 236-37)

Bible doctrine is the answer, but no one learns everything at once. Flexibility in the nonessentials means toleration; toleration means live and let live ... as unto the Lord.

Two Kinds of Love

The next tenet of the [honor] code follows naturally from the principle of toleration. The code demands not only that we love all other believers—"love one another"—but also that we love all people—"love they neighbor" and "love thine enemy." Yet how can we have high standards if we must love everybody?

Thou shalt love they neighbour as thyself. (Rom. 13:9b, KJV)

The phrase "as thyself" is often taken to mean "as *you* love yourself," but there is no basis in the Greek text for that interpretation. Our attitude toward ourselves is often the epitome of instability; the absolute righteousness of God would never set up so vacillating and inconsistent a standard for our conduct. (p. 237)

Romans 13:9 means exactly what it says. "As yourself" points to the source of the love: your own soul, the real you, the place where your own norms and standards reside. This love emphasizes the subject, the one who does the loving, instead of the object, the one who is loved. (pp. 237-38)

Indeed, the one who loves does not need to even know the object in any personal sort of way. This is impersonal love. You are commanded by the honor code to love *all* others on the basis of who *you* are, from your standards, from your integrity, not as a reaction or response to what they are.

“Love thy neighbour as thyself” does not set up self-love as a standard; it requires that you love others from the high standards of doctrine you have in your soul. It is therefore stable and consistent. Impersonal love demands an attitude *in you*, the absence of mental attitude sins, the relaxed mental attitude provided under the filling of the Holy Spirit. If someone maligns you, you do not lower yourself to retaliate (Rom. 12:17a). With your honor code integrity you refuse to get involved in nonessential squabbles. You remain above the howling mob like the aristocrat you are. Your objective in life, the object of your hope and confidence, the source of your motivation and spiritual momentum, shines so brightly ahead that the divine commands to turn the other cheek, to feed your enemy, to bless those who persecute you, become a completely understandable part of the honor code.

Why must we, believers, especially have impersonal love for all? Because every believer possesses the righteousness of God. God respects the principle of His own integrity resident in each believer regardless of that individual's personal traits, habits, or ideas. In fact, justification is defined as God's recognition of imputed righteousness in every believer. We, too, are to respect the righteousness of God wherever it is found. (p. 238)

The honor code, however, demands discernment, and we must distinguish between positive immature believers and negative reversionists. We are to follow a different policy toward each. While we tolerate the growing believer “for the purpose of *the good* [so he can attain the final objective of the plan of God]” (Rom. 15:1-2, corrected translation), we must separate ourselves from those who “cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine” and who “serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly [emotions]; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18, KJV).

Impersonal love also becomes the basis for personal love. Personal love is a very exclusive love. It emphasizes not the subject—you—but the object—the person you love. The special people who are objects of personal love include the Lord Jesus Christ, husband or wife, family, and friends. Personal love requires the same integrity as impersonal love, but something more is added. You are attracted to someone; you know and deeply appreciate that special person. You are occupied with him; you have an emotional attachment to him. None of these are characteristics of impersonal love.

The believer who is never taught to distinguish between personal and impersonal love, who is told instead to love all people with the same love, overloads his soul. He ends up with either a hardened cynicism, a deep-rooted hypocrisy, or a nervous breakdown. For the rest of his life he is soured on Christianity by something that is not even Christianity! (p. 239)

28. Principle: True fellowship is a relationship with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit that results in a relationship with other believers called Christian fellowship.

1 John 1:1 - [Expanded translation] **What was from the beginning of the Incarnation, what we have heard Him say to us, what we have perceived [ὄραω, *horaō*] with our own eyes of His physical person on the Mount of Transfiguration, what we have analytically observed [θεάομαι, *theaomai*] and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—**

v. 2 - **And the Life was revealed [φανερός, *phaneros*: to be made plainly obvious during the Incarnation], and we have both seen [ὄραω, *horaō*: to see and perceive] and testified [μαρτυρέω, *martureō*], and proclaimed [ἀπαγγέλλω, *apangellō*: to make known, e.g., through the epistle of 1 John] the Eternal Life [τὴν ζωὴν αἰώνιον, *tēn zōēn aiōneon*: Jesus Christ], the One Who was [in Eternity Past] with the Father and was manifest [*phaneros*] to us—**

v. 3 - **What we have both seen and heard [divine inspiration], we also proclaim to you [1 John for the purpose of GAP] in order that you [the students of John] also may keep on having fellowship [κοινωνία, *koinōnia*] with us; furthermore, our fellowship [Christian fellowship] is also with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ [fellowship between believers is dependent upon them also being in fellowship with God].**

