

Monergism

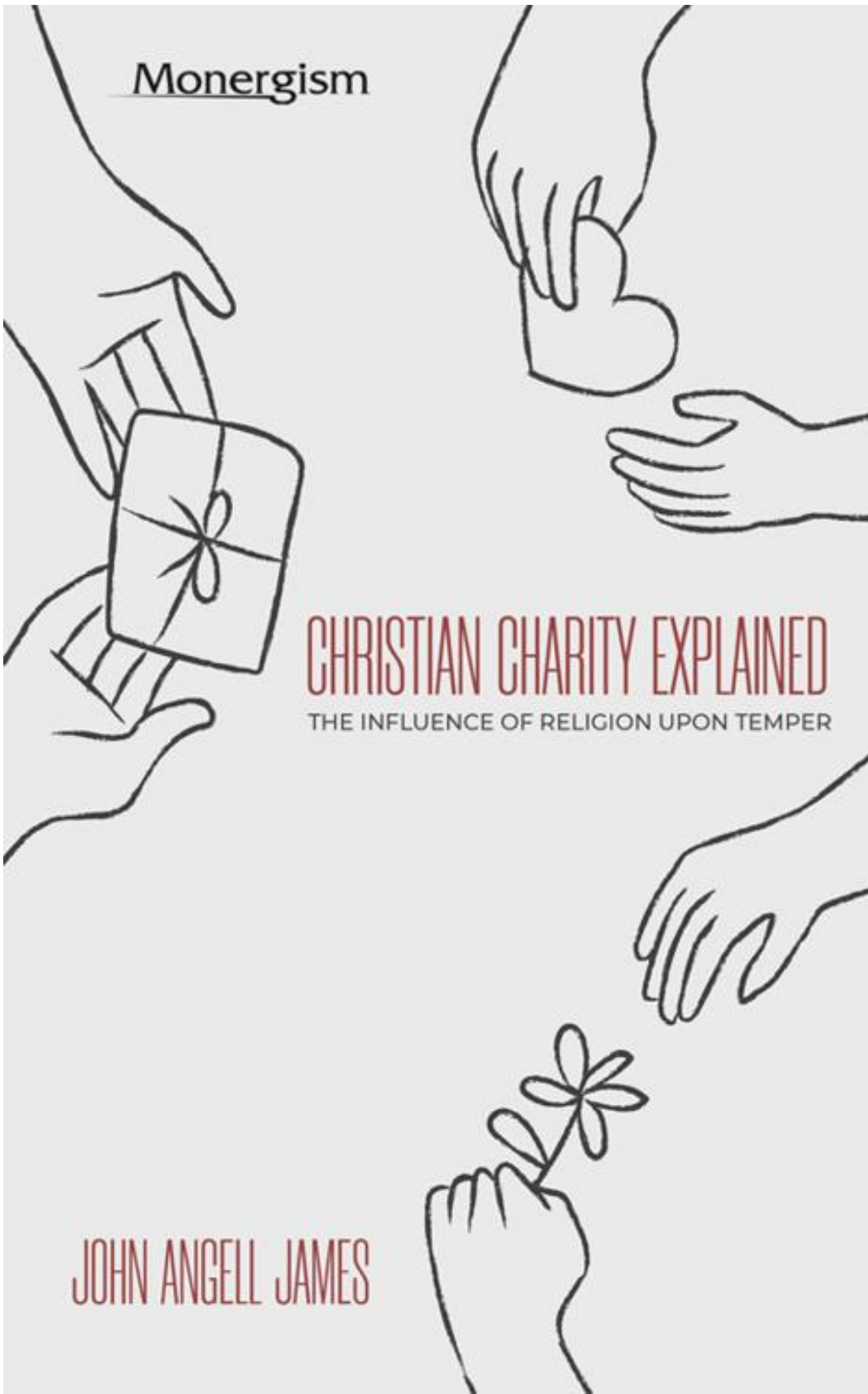


CHRISTIAN CHARITY EXPLAINED

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION UPON TEMPER

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

Monergism



CHRISTIAN CHARITY EXPLAINED
THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION UPON TEMPER

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

Copyright © Monergism Books

Christian Charity Explained

by John Angell James

The Influence of Religion Upon Temper

"If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. Love will last forever. There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love." 1 Corinthians 13

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Preface](#)

[Description and Enforcement of Love](#)

[The Nature of Love](#)

[The Misapplication of Love](#)

[The Indispensable Necessity of Love](#)

[The Properties of Christian Love](#)

[The Meekness of Love](#)

[The Kindness of Love](#)

[The Contentment of Love](#)

[The Humility of Love](#)

[The Decorum of Love](#)

[The Unselfishness of Love](#)

[The Trustfulness of Love](#)

[The Joy of Love](#)

[The Toleration of Love](#)

[The Self-Denial of Love](#)

[The Permanence of Love](#)

[The Pre-eminence of Love](#)

[Instruction](#)

[Examination & Humiliation](#)

[Exhortation](#)

Preface

A work which the Author published a few years since, on the Duties of Church Members, concludes with the following sentence—"Let us remember that HUMILITY and LOVE are the necessary fruits of our doctrines, the highest beauty of our character, and the guardian angels of our churches." To prove and elucidate this sentiment, and to state at greater length than it was possible for him to do in that treatise, the nature, operations, and importance of Love--he was induced to enter upon a series of sermons on the chapter which is the subject of this volume. These Discourses, although, of course, very practical, were heard with much attention and apparent interest. Before they were finished, many requests were presented for their publication; a promise was given to that effect, and the intention announced to the public. On a further inspection of his notes, the Author saw so little that was either novel, or on any account worthy to meet the public eye, that he had for two years quite abandoned his intention of printing. Circumstances which need not be mentioned, together with frequent inquiries from his friends after the forthcoming treatise, drew his attention again to the subject a few months since, and revived the original purpose of sending from the press the substance of these plain and practical discourses. That intention is now executed; with what results the sovereign grace of Jehovah, to whom it is humbly commended, must determine.

The Author can easily suppose, that among many other faults which the scrutinizing eye of criticism will discover in his work, and which its stern voice will condemn, one is the repetitions, of which in some places, it appears to be guilty. In answer to this, he can only remark, that in the discussion of such a subject, where the parts are divided by almost imperceptible lines, and softened down so much into each other, he found it very difficult to avoid this repetition, which after all, is perhaps not always a fault—at least not a capital one.

"Truth and love are two of the most powerful things in the world—and when they both go together, they cannot easily be withstood. The golden beams of Truth, and the silken cords of Love, twisted together, will draw men with a sweet violence—whether they will or not." Cudworth

"If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. Love will last forever. There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love." 1 Corinthians 13

Description and Enforcement of Love

Our Lord Jesus Christ ceased not, during his continuance on earth, to prove, by his miracles—the truth of his claims as the Son of God; and constantly appealed to them in his controversy with the Jews, as the reasons and the grounds of faith in his teachings. By him the power of working miracles was conferred on his apostles, who in the

exercise of this extraordinary gift, cast out demons, and "healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease." Christ also assured them, that under the dispensation of the Spirit, which was to commence after his decease, their miraculous powers should be so much enlarged and multiplied, as to exceed those which had been exercised by himself.

This took place on the day of Pentecost, when the ability to speak other languages, without previous study, was conferred upon them. The apostles, as the ambassadors and messengers of their risen Lord, were authorized and enabled to invest others with the high distinction; for to confer the power of working miracles, was a prerogative confined to the apostolic office. This is evident from many parts of the New Testament. But while apostles only could communicate this power, anyone, not excepting the most obscure and illiterate member of the churches, could receive it—as it was not confined to church officers. It is probable that these gifts were sometimes distributed among all the original members of a church. But as the church increased, they were confined to a more limited number, and granted only to such as were more eminent among the brethren, until at length they were probably restricted to the elders; thus being as gradually withdrawn from the church as they had been communicated.

It is not necessary that we should here explain the nature, and trace the distinction of these endowments—a task which has been acknowledged by all expositors to be difficult, and which is thought by some to be impossible. They constituted the light which fell from heaven upon the church, and to which she appealed as the proofs of her divine origin.

For the possession and exercise of miraculous gifts, the church at Corinth was eminently distinguished. This is evident from the testimony of Paul—"I can never stop thanking God for all the generous gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. He has enriched your church with the gifts of eloquence and every

kind of knowledge." 1 Cor. 1:4-5. And in another place he asks them—"How were you inferior to other churches?" It is indeed both a humiliating and an admonitory consideration, that the church which, of all those planted by the apostles, was the most distinguished for its gifts, should have been the least eminent for its graces, as was the case with the Christian church at Corinth. What a scandalous abuse and profanation of the Lord's supper had crept in! What a schismatical spirit prevailed! What a connivance at sin existed! What resistance to apostolic authority was set up!

To account for this, it should be recollected that the possession of miraculous gifts by no means implied the existence and influence of sanctifying grace! Those extraordinary powers were entirely distinct from the qualities which are essential to the character of a real Christian. They are powers conferred not at all, or in a very subordinate degree, for the benefit of the individual himself—but were distributed, according to the sovereignty of the divine will—for the edification of believers, and the conviction of unbelievers. Hence says the apostle—"So you see that speaking in tongues is a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for the benefit of believers, not unbelievers." 1 Cor. 14:22.

Our Lord, also, has informed us that miraculous endowments were not necessarily connected with, but were often disconnected from, personal piety. "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" Matthew 7:22-23. Paul supposes the same thing in the commencement of this chapter, where he says—"If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. If I gave everything I have to the

poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever." 1 Cor. 13:1-3. This hypothetical mode of speech certainly implies that gifts and grace are not necessarily connected.

This is a very solemn consideration, and, by showing how far self-deception may be carried, ought to be felt as a solemn admonition to all professing Christians—to be very careful and diligent in the great business of self-examination.

It is evident, both from the nature of things, and from the reasoning of the apostle, that some of the miraculous powers were more admired, and therefore more popular, than others. The gift of tongues, as is plain from the reasoning in the fourteenth chapter, appears to have been most coveted, because eloquence was so much esteemed by the Greeks—to reason and orate in public, as a talent, was much admired, and as a practice, was exceedingly common—schools were established to teach the art of oration, and places of public resort were frequented to display it. Hence in the church of Christ, and especially with those whose hearts were unsanctified by Divine grace, and who converted miraculous operations into a means of personal ambition, the gift of tongues was the most admired of all these extraordinary powers. A desire after conformity to the envied distinctions of the world, has ever been the snare and the reproach of many of the members of the Christian community.

Where distinctions exist, many evils will be sure to follow, as long as human nature is in an imperfect state. Talents, or the power of fixing attention upon one's self, and raising admiration to one's self—will be valued above virtues. And the more popular talents will occupy, in the estimate of 'personal ambition', a higher rank than those that are useful. Consequently, we must expect, wherever opportunities present themselves, to see, on the one hand, pride, vanity, arrogance, love of display, boasting, selfishness, conscious superiority, and a susceptibility to being easily offended. While on the other hand, we shall witness an equally offensive exhibition of envy, suspicion,

imputation of evil, exultation over the failures of others, and a disposition to magnify and report the offences of others.

Such evil passions are not entirely excluded from the church of God, at least during its present earthly state—and they were most abundantly exhibited among the Christians at Corinth. Those who had gifts were too apt to exult over those that had none. While the latter indulged in envy and ill-will towards the former—those who were favored with the most distinguished endowments, vaunted of their achievements over those who attained only to the humbler gifts. And all these petulant passions were indulged to such a degree, as well near to banish Christian love from the church at Corinth. This unhappy state of things, the apostle found it necessary to correct, which he did by a series of most conclusive arguments. Such, for instance, as that all these gifts are the bestowments of the Spirit, who in distributing them, exercises a wise sovereignty—that they are all bestowed for mutual advantage, and not for personal glory—that this variety is essential for general edification—that the useful gifts are to be more valued than those of a more dazzling nature—that they are dependent on each other for their efficiency. And he then concludes his admonition and representation, by introducing to their notice that heavenly virtue, which he so beautifully describes in the chapter under consideration, and which he exalts in value and importance above the most coveted miraculous powers.

"But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way." 1 Cor. 12:31. "You are ambitious to obtain these endowments which shall cause you to be esteemed as the most honorable and distinguished people in the church; but notwithstanding your high notions of the respect due to those who excel in miracles, I now point out to you a way to still greater honor, by a road open to you all, and in which your success will neither produce pride in yourselves, nor excite envy in others. Pursue love, for the possession and exercise of this grace is infinitely to be preferred to the most splendid gift."

Admirable tribute—exalted eulogy on love! What more could be said, or be said more properly, to raise it in our esteem, and to impress it upon our heart? The age of miracles is past—the signs, and the tokens, and the powers which accompanied it, and which, like the brilliant lights from heaven, hung in bright effulgence over the early church, are vanished. No longer can the members or ministers of Christ confound the mighty, perplex the wise, or guide the simple enquirer after truth, by the demonstration of the Spirit and of power—the control of the laws of nature, and of the spirits of darkness, are no longer entrusted to us. But that which is more excellent and more heavenly remains—that which is more valuable in itself, and less liable to abuse, continues; and that is—Love! Miracles were but the credentials of Christianity, but Love is its essence! Miracles but its witnesses, which, having ushered it into the world, and borne their testimony, retired forever. But Love is its very soul, which, when disencumbered of all that is earthly, shall ascend to its native place—the paradise and the presence of the eternal God!

The Nature of Love

In the discussion of every subject, it is of great importance to ascertain, and to fix with precision, the meaning of the terms by which it is expressed. More especially in those cases where, as in the present instance, the principal word has acquired, by the changes of time and the usages of society, more senses than one. In modern times the word charity is often employed to signify almsgiving—a circumstance which has thrown a partial obscurity over many passages of Scripture, and has led, indeed, to the most gross perversion of Divine truth, and the circulation of the most dangerous errors. We shall in this treatise substitute for charity, the word LOVE, which is a correct translation of the original.

Of what kind of love does the apostle treat? Not of love to God, as is evident from the whole chapter; for the properties which are here enumerated have no direct reference to Jehovah, but relate in every instance to man. It is a disposition, founded, no doubt, upon love to God—but it is not the same.

Nor is it, as some have represented, the love of the brethren. Without all question, we are under special obligations to love those who are the children of God, and joint heirs with us in Christ. "This is my commandment," says Christ, "that you love one another." "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples—if you love one another." Our brethren in Christ should be the first and dearest objects of our regard. Love to them is the badge of discipleship—the proof, both to ourselves and to the world, that we have passed from death unto life. And although we are "to do good unto all men," yet we are especially to regard "the household of faith." But still, the love of the brethren as such, is not the disposition which is here enjoined—although it is included in it.

A far more comprehensive duty is laid down, which is LOVE TO MANKIND IN GENERAL. (This benevolence does not stop at intelligent beings, but goes forth with entire good-will to the animal creation—to all beings which are capable of pleasure or pain. Surely in the love which is the fulfilling of the law, must be comprehended that mercy which causes a righteous man to regard the life and comfort of his animals, since this is a part of moral goodness which God has seen fit to approve. But in this chapter the apostle limits the objects of our benevolence to mankind.)

As a proof of this, I refer to the nature of its exercises. Do they not as much respect the unconverted as the converted; the unbeliever as the believer? Are we not as much bound to be meek and kind, humble, forgiving, and patient toward all people—as we are towards our brethren? Or, may we be envious, passionate, proud, and revengeful towards unbelievers? We have only to consider the operations and effects of love as here described, and to recollect that they are as

much required in our interaction with the world, as with the church, to perceive at once, that it is love to all people—which is the subject of this chapter. Nor is this the only place where 'universal philanthropy' is enjoined. The apostle Peter, in his chain of graces, makes this the last link, and distinguishes it from "brotherly kindness," to which, says he, add "love." The disposition inculcated in this chapter, is that love which Peter commands us to add to brotherly kindness; it is, in fact, the very state of mind which is the compendium of the second table of the moral law, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

The temper so beautifully set forth by Paul, is a most lively, luminous, and eloquent exposition of this summary of duty to our neighbor, which is given us by our Lord.

Strange, indeed, would it be, if Christianity, the most perfect system of duty as well as of doctrine that God ever gave to the world, should contain no injunction to cultivate a spirit of general love and good-will. Strange, indeed, if that system which rises upon the earth with the smiling aspect of universal benevolence, did not breathe its own spirit into the hearts of its believers. Strange, indeed, if while God loved the world, and Christ died for it—the world in no sense was to be an object of a Christian's regard. Strange, indeed, if the energies, the exercises, and propensities of true piety, were to be confined within the narrow boundaries of the church, and to be allowed no excursions into the widely extended regions that lie beyond, and to have no sympathies for the countless millions by which these regions are peopled. It would have been regarded as a blank in Christianity, as a deep, wide chasm, had philanthropy gained no place, or but a small one, amid its duties. And such an omission must ever have presented a lack of harmony between its doctrines and its precepts; a point of dissimilarity between the perfection of the divine character, and the required completeness of the human character.

Here, then, is the disposition inculcated—a spirit of universal love—good-will to mankind—a delight in human happiness—a carefulness

to avoid whatever would lessen, and to do whatever would increase, the amount of the felicity of mankind—a love that is limited to no circle; which is restricted by no partialities, no friendships, no relationships—around which neither prejudices nor personal aversions are allowed to draw a boundary—which realizes as its proper objects, friends, strangers, and enemies—which requires no qualifications of anyone, but that he is a human being—and which searches for man wherever he is to be found. It is an affection which binds its possessor to all of his race, and makes him a good citizen of the universe.

We must possess domestic affections, to render us good members of a family; we must have the more extended principles of patriotism, to render us good members of the state—and for the same reason, we must possess universal benevolence, to render us good members of a system which comprises the whole human race. This is the universal virtue—the one simple principle, out of which so many and such beautiful ramifications of holy benevolence evolve! All the actings of love, so finely described by the apostle, may be traced up to this delight in happiness—they all consist in doing that which will promote the comfort of others, or in not doing that which will hinder their peace—whether they consist in passive or in active properties, they have a direct bearing on general well-being of society.

But although we represent this love as consisting in a principle of universal benevolence, we would remark, that instead of satisfying itself with 'mere speculations on the desirableness of the well-being of the whole', or with mere good wishes for the happiness of mankind in general—instead of that indolent sentimentalism, which would convert its inability to benefit the great body into an excuse for doing good to none of its members. True Christian love will put forth its energies, and engage its activities for those which are within its reach. It would, if it could, touch the extreme parts; but as this cannot be done, it will exert a beneficial influence on those which are near; its very distance from the circumference will be felt as a motive to greater zeal in promoting the comfort of all that may be adjoining,

and it will consider that the best and only way of reaching the last, is by an impulse given to what is adjoining.

True Christian love will view every individual it has to do with, as a representative of his species, and consider him as offering strong claims, both on his own account, and on account of his race. Towards all, it will retain a feeling of good-will, a preparedness for benevolent activity; and towards those who come within the sphere of its influence, it will go forth in the actings of kindness.

Like the pupil of an eye, true Christian love can dilate to see, though but dimly, the whole prospect; or it can constrict its view, and concentrate its attention upon each individual object that comes under its inspection. The people with whom we daily converse and act, are those on whom our benevolence is first and most constantly to express itself, because these are the parts of the whole, which give us the opportunity of calling into exercise our universal philanthropy. But to them it is not to be confined, either in feeling or action; for as we have opportunity, we are to do good to all men, and to send abroad our beneficent regards to the great family of mankind.

Nor are we to confound this virtue with a 'mere natural amiableness of disposition'. It is often our lot to witness a species of kindness, which, like the painting or the statue, is a very near resemblance of the original; but which still is only a picture or a statue, and lacks the mysterious principle of life. From that mere good-will to man which even unconverted people may possess—the love described by the apostle differs in the following particulars—

1. Christian love is one of the FRUITS OF REGENERATION. "The fruit of the Spirit is love." Unless a man is born of the Spirit—he can do nothing that is spiritually good. We are by nature corrupt and unholy—destitute of all love to God—and until renewed by the Holy Spirit in the spirit of our mind, we can do nothing well-pleasing to God. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature," and this love of

our race is a part of the new creation. It is in the strictest sense of the term, a holy virtue, and one great branch of holiness itself; for what is holiness, but love to God, and love to man? And without that previous change which is denominated being "born again," we can no more love man as we ought to do, than we can love God. Divine grace is as essentially necessary for the production and exercise of Christian philanthropy, as it is for piety; and the former is no less a part of true religion than the latter. Love is the Divine nature, the image of God—which is communicated to the soul of man by the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit.

2. Christian love is the EFFECT OF FAITH. Hence it is said by the apostle, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which works by love." And by another inspired writer it is represented as a part of the superstructure which is raised on the basis of faith, "Add to your faith—love." It is certain that there can be no proper regard to man, which does not result from faith in Christ. It is the belief of the truth which makes love to be felt as a duty, and which brings before the mind the great examples, the powerful motives, furnished by the Scriptures to promote its exercise. Nothing spiritually excellent can be performed without faith. It is by faith alone, that anything we do is truly and properly pious. Saving faith is the identifying Christian principle, separate and apart from which, whatever excellence men may exhibit, is but mere morality. By faith we submit to the authority of God's law; by faith we are united to Christ, and "receive from his fullness, and grace for grace." By faith we contemplate the love of God in Christ—by faith our conduct becomes acceptable to God through Christ.

3. Christian love is exercised in obedience to the authority of God's word. Christian love is a principle—not merely a feeling. Christian love is cultivated and exercised as a duty—not yielded to merely as a generous instinct. Christian love is a submission to God's command—not merely an indulgence of our own propensities. Christian love is the constraint of conscience—not merely the impulse of

constitutional tenderness. Christian love may be, and often is found, where there is no natural softness, or amiableness of temper. Where natural softness and amiableness already exist, Christian love will grow with greater rapidity, and expand to greater magnitude, and flourish in greater beauty. But Christian love may still be planted in a less congenial situation, and thrive, in obedience to the law of its nature—amid barrenness and rocks.

Multitudes, who have nothing of sentimentalism in their nature, have love to man. They rarely can melt into tears, or kindle into rapture—but they can be all energy and activity for the relief of misery, and for the promotion of human happiness—their temperament of mind partakes more of the frigid than of the torrid, and their summer seasons of the soul are short and cold. But still, amid their mild, and even lovely winter, love, like the rose, blooms in fragrance and in beauty. This is their rule—"God has commanded me to love my neighbor as myself; and in obedience to him, I restrain my natural sinful tendencies—and forgive the injuries, and relieve the miseries, and build up the comfort, and hide the faults of all around me."

4. Christian love is founded upon, and grows out of, love to God. We are to love God for his own sake, and men for God's sake. Our Lord has laid down this as the order and rule of our affections. We must first love God with all our heart, and soul, and mind—and then our neighbors as ourselves. Now, there can be no proper religious affection for our neighbor, which does not spring out of supreme regard for Jehovah; since our love to our neighbor must respect him as the offspring and workmanship of God—"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too." Besides, as we are to exercise this disposition in obedience to the authority of God, and as no obedience to his authority can be valuable in itself, or acceptable to him, which is not an operation of love—no kindness to our neighbor can come up to the nature of the duty here enjoined, which does not arise out of a proper state of heart towards God.

apart from God; whereupon the things men love are their idols,

Let us, then, remember that the beautiful superstructure of philanthropy which the apostle has raised in this chapter, has for its foundation a supreme regard for the great and blessed God. The utmost kindness and sympathy—the most tender compassion, united with the most munificent liberality—if it does not rest on the love of God—is not the temper here set forth—is not the grace which has the principle of immortality in its nature, and which will live and flourish in eternity, when faith and hope shall cease.

'Human excellence', however noble, whatever good it may diffuse upon others, or whatever glory it may draw around itself—if it is not sanctified and supported by this holy principle, is corruptible and mortal, and cannot dwell in the presence of God, nor exist amid the glories of eternity; but it is only the flower of the grass which shall wither away in the rebuke of the Almighty. For lack of this vital and essential principle of all true religion—how much of amiable compassion, and of tender attention to the woes of humanity—how much of kindly feeling and active benevolence, is daily expended—which, while it yields its amiable though unbelieving author much honor and delight—has not the weight of a feather in the scales of his eternal destiny!

5. This disposition of Christian love is nourished in our hearts by a sense of God's love in Christ Jesus to us.

There is this peculiarity in the morality of the New Testament—it is enforced by the consideration of Divine goodness to ourselves. Not that any motive is absolutely necessary to make a command binding upon our conscience, beyond God's right to issue it; the obligation to duty is complete, in the absence of every other consideration than the rightful authority of the command. But as man is a creature capable of being moved by appeals to his gratitude, as well as by motives addressed to his fears, it is both wise and condescending on the part of Jehovah thus to deal with him, and to "make him willing

in the day of his power." He thus not only drives us by the force of his terrors—but draws us by the cords of his love!

The great evangelical inducement to mutual affection between man and man—is God's love in Christ Jesus to us. God has commended and manifested his love to us in a manner that will fill immensity and eternity with astonishment—He has "so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!" This stupendous exhibition of Divine mercy is presented by the sacred writers, not only as a source of strong consolation, but also as a powerful motive to action. We are not only to contemplate it for the purpose of joy, but also of imitation. Mark the beautiful reasoning of the apostle John—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us—we ought also to love one another." Similar to this is also the inference of Paul—"Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him." Ephes. 4:32-5:2. How forcible, yet how tender is such language! There is a charm in such a motive which no terms can describe.

The love of God, then—in its existence and contrivance from eternity—in its manifestation in time, by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ—in its topless height, its fathomless depth, its measureless length and breadth—is the grand inducement to universal affection! Is not God's love for us, enough to soften a heart of stone—to melt a heart of ice? The love spoken of in the chapter under consideration, is that same impulse towards our fellow-men which is given us by the cross of Christ. It is not mere natural kindness—but it is love for Christ's sake. It is not the mere operations of a generous temper—but it is the feeling which moved in the apostle's bosom, when he exclaimed,

"The love of Christ constrains us!" It is not natural sentimentality and amiability—but Christian love.

True Christian love is, so to speak, a plant which grows on Calvary, and entwines itself for support around the cross. It is a disposition which argues in this way—Has God indeed thus loved me, so as to give his Son for my salvation? And is he kind to me daily for the sake of Christ? Has he forgiven all my numberless and aggravated transgressions? Does he still, with infinite patience, bear with all my frailties and provocations? Then what is there, in the way of most generous affection, I ought not to be willing to do, or to bear, or to sacrifice, for others? Do they offend me? Let me bear with them, and forgive them; for how has God borne with me, and blotted out my sins! Are they destitute? Let me be first to supply their necessities—for how greatly has God supplied mine! Here then is love—that deep sense of God's love to us, which shows us the necessity, the reasonableness, the duty of being kind to others—the feeling of a heart, which, laboring under the weight of its obligations to God, and finding itself too poor to extend its goodness to him, looks round, and gives utterance to its exuberant gratitude in acts of kindness to mankind.

6. Christian love is that good-will to men which, while its proximate object is the welfare of our fellow-creatures—is ultimately directed to the glory of God.

It is the sublime characteristic of every truly Christian virtue—that whatever inferior ends it may seek, and through whatever intervening medium it may pass—it is directed ultimately to the praise of Jehovah! It may put forth its excellencies before the admiring eyes of mortals, and exert its energies for their happiness; but neither to attract their applause, nor to build up their esteem—must be its highest aim. The rule of our conduct, as to its chief end, is thus explicitly and comprehensively laid down—"Whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatever you do—do all to the glory of God!" This is not mere advice, but a command—and it is a command

extending to all our conduct. To glorify God is to act so that his authority shall be recognized and upheld by us in the world; it is to be seen submitting to his will, and behaving so as that his word and ways shall be better thought of by mankind. Our actions must appear to have a reference to God; and without this, they cannot partake of the character of true religion, however excellent and beneficial they may seem in themselves.

But, perhaps, this disposition of mind will be best illustrated by exhibiting an example of it; and where shall we find one suited to our purpose? Every mind will, perhaps, immediately revert to HIM who was love incarnate; and we might indeed point to every action of his benevolent career, as a display of the purest philanthropy. But, as his example will hereafter be considered, we shall now select one from men of like passions with ourselves; but we must go for it to "the chamber where the pious man meets his fate," rather than to the resorts of the healthy and the active; for it seems as if the brightest beauties of this love were reserved, like those of the setting sun, for the eve of its departure to another hemisphere.

How often have we beheld the dying Christian, who during long and mortal sickness has exhibited, as he stood on the verge of heaven, something of the spirit of a glorified immortal! The natural infirmities of temper which attended him through life, and which sometimes dimmed the luster of his piety, disturbed his own peace, and lessened the pleasure of his friends—had all departed, or had sunk into the shade of those holy graces which then stood out in bold and commanding relief upon his soul. The beams of heaven now falling upon his spirit were reflected, not only in the faith, that is the confidence of things not seen—not only in the hope which enters within the veil—but in the love which is the greatest in the trinity of Christian virtues.

How meek in heart did he seem—how entirely clothed with humility! Instead of being puffed up with anything of his own, or uttering a single boastful expression, it was like a wound in his heart to hear

anyone remind him either of his good deeds or dispositions. And he appeared in his own eyes less than ever, while like his emblem, the setting sun, he expanded every moment into greater magnitude, in the view of every spectator. Instead of envying the possessions or the excellencies of other men, it was pleasant to his departing spirit that others were thus ennobled. How kind is he to his friends! And as for enemies, he had none—all animosity had died in his heart. He forgave all that was manifestly evil, and kindly interpreted all that was only equivocally so. Nothing lived in his recollection, as to the conduct of others—but their acts of kindness. When news reached his ear of the misconduct of those who had been his adversaries, he grieved in spirit—even as he rejoiced when told of his enemies coming back to public esteem by deeds of excellence. His very opinions seemed under the influence of his love; and, as he wished well, he believed well, or hoped well—of many of whom he had formerly thought evil. His meekness and patience were touching, his kindness indescribable—the trouble he gave, and the favors he received, drew tears from his own eyes—and were acknowledged in expressions that drew tears from all around. There was an ineffable tenderness in his looks, and his words were the very accents of kindness. He was a pattern of all the passive virtues; and having thus thrown off much that was of the earth, earthly, and put on love as a garment, and dressed himself for heaven, in his sick room, he departed to be with Christ, and to be forever perfect in love.

There was a man in whom this was realized, and some extracts from his invaluable memoir will prove it; I mean Mr. Scott, the author of the Commentary.

"His mind," says his biographer, "dwelt much upon love. He seemed full of tenderness and affection to all around him. 'One evidence,' he said, 'I have of meekness for heaven—I feel much love to all mankind, to every man upon earth—to those who have most opposed and slandered me.' To his servant he said, 'I thank you for all your kindness to me. If at any time I have been hasty and short with you, forgive me—and lay the blame upon me, not upon true religion.'

"In such a state of extreme suffering, His tender affection for us all was astonishing, and cut us to the heart. He begged his assistant to forgive him, if he had been occasionally rough and sharp. 'I meant it for your good; but, like everything of mine, it was mixed with sin; impute it not, however, to my religion, but to my lack of true religion.' He was so gentle and loving—it was so delightful to attend upon him—that his servants, finding themselves in danger of contention which should wait upon him, agreed to take it by turns, that each might have her due share of the pleasure and benefit; and yet he was continually begging our forgiveness for his lack of patience and thankfulness. His kindness and affection to all who approached him were carried to the greatest height, and showed themselves in a singularly minute attention to all their individual feelings, and whatever might be for their comfort, to a degree that was quite affecting—especially when he was suffering so much himself often in mind as well as body.

"There was an astonishing absence of selfish feelings—even in his worst hours, he thought of the health of us all; observed if we sat up long, and insisted on our retiring; and was much afraid of paining or hurting us in any way. Someone said something on the permanency of his Commentary—'Ah!' he cried, 'you know not what a proud heart I have, and how you help the Devil.' He also said, 'To those who have greatly slandered me—I cannot feel any resentment. I can only love and pity them, and pray for their salvation. I never did feel any resentment towards them. I regret that I did not more ardently long and pray for their salvation.'"

Can we conceive of a more beautiful exemplification of the virtue I am describing? And this is the temper we ought all to seek. This is love, blended with all our living habits, diffused through all our conduct, forming our character, breathing in our desires, speaking in our words, beaming in our eyes—in short, a living part of our living selves. And this, be it remembered, is true religion—practical religion. "If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries

and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains--but have not love, I am nothing!" 1 Corinthians 13:2.

The Misapplication of Love

A separate and entire section is here devoted to this distinction of love from a counterfeit resemblance of it, because of the importance of the subject, and the frequency with which the mistake is made of confounding things which are so different from each other. No terms have been more misunderstood or abused, than 'toleration' and love. Some have found in them, an authorization to sanction all religious opinions, however opposed to one another or to the word of God; and a permission to indulge in all sinful practices which do not transgress the laws of our country! So that by the aid of these two words, all truth and holiness may be driven out of the world! For if error be innocent, truth must be unimportant. And if we are to be indulgent towards the sins of others, under the sanction and by the command of Scripture, holiness can be of no consequence either to them or to ourselves.

If we were to hearken to some, we would conceive of love, not as she really is—a spirit of ineffable beauty, descending from heaven upon our fallen earth, holding in her hand the torch of truth, which she had lighted at the fountain of celestial radiance, and clad in a vest of unsullied purity; and who, as she entered upon the scene of discord, proclaimed "glory to God in the highest," as well as "peace on earth, good-will to men," and having with these magic words, healed the troubled waters of strife, proceeded to draw men closer to each other, by drawing them closer to Christ, the common center of believers; and then hushing the clamours of contention, by removing the pride, the ignorance, and the depravity which produced them. No! but we would think of her as a lying spirit—clad, indeed, in some of the attire of an angel of light, but bearing no heavenly impress,

holding no torch of truth, wearing no robe of holiness; smiling, perhaps, but like a flatterer, upon all without distinction; calling upon men, as they are combating for truth and striving against sin, to sheathe their swords, and cast away their shields, to be indulgent towards each other's vices, and tolerant of each other's errors; because they all mean and feel substantially alike, though they have different modes of expressing their opinions, and of giving utterance to their feelings. Is this love? No! It is Satan in the garments of Gabriel.

That there is much spurious toleration in the world, and that it is advocated by great names, will appear by the following quotation from Dr. Priestley—"If we could be so happy as to believe that there are no errors but what men may be so circumstanced as to be innocently betrayed into; that any mistake of the head is very consistent with rectitude of heart; and that all differences in modes of worship, may be only the different methods, by which different men, who are equally the offspring of God, are endeavoring to honor and obey their common parent—our difference of opinion would have no tendency to lessen our mutual love and esteem." Dr. Priestley, and the followers of his religious system, are not peculiar in this sentiment. Pope's Universal Prayer is to the same effect—

"Father of all, in every age,
In every climate adored,
By saint, by savage, or by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord."

The well-known metrical adage of this poet is adopted, to the full extent of its spirit and design, by great multitudes who suppose that they are quite orthodox both in opinion and practice, and who perhaps boast of their love, while they exclaim—

"For modes of faith, let graceless zealots fight,
His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right."

It is, I imagine, generally thought by at least a great part of mankind, that it is of little consequence what a man's religious opinions are, provided his conduct be tolerably correct; that love requires us to think well of his state; and that it is the very essence of bigotry to question the validity of his claim to the character of a Christian, or to doubt of the safety of his soul. In other words, it is pretended that benevolence requires us to think well of men, irrespective of religious opinions; and that it is almost a violation of the rule of love to attempt to unsettle their convictions, or to render them uneasy in the possession of their sentiments, although we may conclude them to be fundamentally wrong. But does this approval of all opinions—at least this disposition to think well of people as to their religious character, and the safety of their souls, whatever may be the doctrines they hold—enter essentially into the nature of love? Most certainly not—but actually opposes it!

Benevolence is good will to men—but this is a very different thing from a good opinion of their false principles and evil practices. For if I believe that a man holds opinions that endanger his safety, benevolence requires not that I should shut my eyes to his danger, and lull him into false confidence; but that I should bear my testimony and express my fears concerning his situation. Benevolence is a very different thing from acceptance or esteem. These are founded on approbation of character. Benevolence is nothing more than a desire to promote happiness.

The question, whether love is to be confounded with 'indifference to religious principle'—for such does the spurious toleration I am contending against amount to—is best decided by an appeal to Scripture. How decisive are such passages as the following—"You shall know the truth," said Christ, "and the truth shall make you free." "This is life eternal—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." "He who believes on the Son has everlasting life; and he who believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

With what emphasis did the apostle speak of the conduct of those who attempted to pervert the great doctrine of justification by faith, by introducing the obsolete ceremonies of the Jewish law, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed." Now, certainly, this is anything but 'indifference to religious opinion'—for, be it observed, it was matter of opinion, and not the duties of morality, or of practical religion, that was here so strenuously opposed. The apostle commands Timothy "to hold fast the form of sound words—and to give himself to doctrine." The apostle John has this strong language—"Whoever transgresses, and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, has not God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work." Jude commands us "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

From these, and many other passages which might be quoted, it is evident, not only that truth is important and necessary to salvation; but that error is guilty, and in many instances is connected with the loss of the soul. If a man may disbelieve one truth, and yet be free from sin for so doing, he may disbelieve two; and if two, four; and if four, ten; and if ten, half the Bible; and if half the Bible, the whole; and if he may be a Deist and yet be in a safe state, he may be an Atheist and still go to heaven. To such awful lengths may the principle be pushed, that there is no guilt in mental error. "Let those," says Dr. Priestley, "who maintain that the mere holding of opinions (without regard to the motives and state of the mind through which men may have been led to form them,) will necessarily exclude them from the favor of God, be particularly careful with respect to the premises from which they draw so alarming a conclusion." Nothing can be more sophistical than this passage; for we do not, in asserting the 'guiltiness of a false opinion',

leave out the state of the heart; but contend that all errors in the judgment have their origin in the depravity of our nature, and, in so far as they prevail, discover a heart not brought into subjection to Christ. A perfectly holy mind could not err in the opinion it derived from the word of God—and it may be most fairly presumed that there are certain fundamental truths, which cannot be rejected, without such a degree of depravity of heart, as is utterly incompatible with true piety towards God.

It is to be recollected that the holiness required in the word of God, is a very superior thing to what is called 'mere morality'. Holiness is a right state of mind towards God, and it is enforced by motives drawn from the view which the Scriptures give us of the Divine nature, and of the Divine conduct towards us. If our views of God, and of his scheme of mercy, be false, the motives which influence us cannot be correct. Hence, all right feeling and conduct are traced up by the sacred writers to the truth. Do they speak of regeneration? they tell us we are "begotten by the incorruptible seed of the word." Do they speak of sanctification? they ascribe it, so far as instrumentality is concerned, to the truth; and the truth itself is characterized as a "doctrine according to godliness." It is evident, that without the truth, or in other words, without right opinions, we can neither be born again of the Spirit, nor partake of true holiness.

The whole process of practical and experimental religion is carried on by the instrumentality of right sentiments; and to suppose that holiness could be produced in the soul as well by error as by truth, is not only contrary to revelation, but no less contrary to reason. If truth sanctifies—error must in some way or other pollute; for to suppose that two causes, not only so distinct, but so opposite, can produce the same effect, is absurd; and the Scriptures everywhere insist upon the importance of the truth, not merely on its own account, but on account of its moral effect upon the soul.

If this view of the subject be correct, Christian love cannot mean 'indifference to religious sentiment'; for if so, it would be a temper of

mind in direct opposition to a large portion of the Scripture. Nor are we required by this virtue to give the least countenance to what we think is error. We may, indeed, be called bigots; for this term, in the lips of many, means nothing more than a reproach for attaching importance to right sentiments. No word has been more misunderstood than this. If by bigotry is meant such an overweening attachment to our opinions as makes us refuse to listen to arguments; such a blind regard to our own views as closes the avenues of reason; such a selfish zeal for our creed as actually destroys benevolence, and causes us to hate those who differ from us—it is an evil state of mind, manifestly at variance with love!

But if as is generally the case, it means with those who use it, only 'zeal for truth', it is perfectly consistent with love and actually a part of it; for "love rejoices in the truth." It is quite compatible with goodwill to men, therefore, to attach high importance to doctrines, to condemn error, to deny the Christianity and safety of those who withhold their assent from fundamental truths, and to abstain from all such religious communion with them, as would imply in the least possible degree anything like indifference to opinion. It appears to me that the most perfect benevolence to men, is that which, instead of looking with complacency on their errors, warns them of their danger, and admonishes them to escape. It is no matter that they think they are right—this only makes their case the more alarming; and to act towards them as if we thought their mistaken views of no consequence, is only to confirm their delusion, and to aid their destruction!

It is true we are neither to despise them nor persecute them—we are neither to oppress nor ridicule them—we are neither to look upon them with haughty scorn, nor with callous indifference—but while we set ourselves against their errors, we are to pity them with sincere compassion, and to labor for their conversion with unselfish kindness. We are to bear with unruffled meekness all their provoking sarcasms; and to sustain, with deep humility, the consciousness of our clearer perceptions; and to convince them, that with the steadiest

resistance of their principles, we unite the tenderest concern for their welfare.

And if love does not imply indifference to religious opinions, so neither does it mean acceptance of sin. There are some people whose views of the evil of sin are so dim and contracted, or their good nature is so accommodating and unscriptural, that they make all kinds of excuses for men's transgressions, and allow of any latitude for human frailty. The greatest sins—if they are not committed against the laws of society—are reduced to the mere 'infirmities of our fallen nature', which should not be visited with harsh censure; and as for the lesser ones, they are mere specks upon a bright and polished surface, which nothing but a most fastidious intolerance would ever notice. Such people severely censure all who oppose and condemn iniquity; and revile them as malignant opposers to the cheerfulness of society—the very dregs of puritanism and barbarism; and reproach them as being destitute of all the charities and courtesies of life!

But if toleration be a confounding of the distinctions between sin and holiness—a depreciating of the excellence of holiness, and at the same time a diminishing of the evil of sin; if it necessarily leads us to tolerate with an easy and good-natured air, all iniquity; and to smile with a kind and gentle aspect upon the transgressions which we witness; then it must be something openly at variance with the letter and the spirit of biblical revelation—and surely that toleration which runs counter to the mind of God, cannot be the love on which Paul passes such a eulogium in this chapter.

We are told by the Word of God that sin is exceedingly evil; that it is the abominable thing which God hates; that the wages of it are eternal death; that by unholy thoughts and feelings we violate the law. We are commanded to abstain from sin's very appearance; we are warned against excusing it in ourselves, or in each other; we are admonished to reprove it, to resist it, and to oppose it—to the uttermost. Certainly, then, it cannot be required by the law of love,

that we should look with a mild and tolerant eye on sin! Love to man arises out of love to God; but can it be possible to love God, and not to hate sin? Love is the fruit of faith, but faith purifies the heart; it is cherished by a sense of redeeming love—and the very end of the scheme of redemption is the destruction of sin.

Approval of men in their sins, and toleration of their iniquity, instead of being an act of benevolence, is the greatest cruelty! Hence the emphatic language of God to the Israelites—"Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt." Would it be benevolence to approve that conduct by which any individual was bringing disease upon his body—or poverty into his circumstances? If not, how can it be benevolent to leave him, without a warning, to do that which will involve his soul in eternal ruin? To think more lightly of the evil of sin than the Word of God does—to call that good or even 'indifferent', which Scripture calls evil—to make allowances, which Scripture does not make, for human frailty—to frame excuses for sin which Scripture disallows—to lull the consciences of men, by considerations in extenuation of guilt which Scripture forbids—or to do anything to produce other views and feelings in reference to iniquity, than such as are warranted by Scripture—is not love, but a participation in other men's sins!

It is the nature of love, I admit, not to be hasty to impute evil motives to actions of a doubtful nature; not to take pleasure in finding out the faults of others; not to magnify them beyond the reality, but to make all the allowance that a regard to truth will allow; to hope the best in the absence of proof; and to be willing to forgive the offence when it has been committed against ourselves. But to carry it beyond this, and let it degenerate into an affability which is afraid to rebuke, or oppose, or condemn sin—lest we would offend the transgressor, or violate the law of courtesy, or subject ourselves to the reproach of being a censorious bigot; which courts the good-will, and promotes the self-satisfaction of others, by approval of their sins; which seeks to ingratiate itself into their affections, by being indulgent to their

vices—is to violate and forget every obligation which we are laid under, both to love God and our neighbor! This kind of 'sentimental toleration' is opposed both to piety and the eternal welfare of humanity! This is not the love enjoined in so many places in the New Testament!

No! No! Christian love is not a poor old senile person—creeping about the world, too blind to perceive the distinction between good and evil. Nor is Christian love a fawning flatterer, too timid to reprove the bold transgressor, and smiling with insincere adulation and imbecile approval of the errors and iniquities of the human race! True Christian love is a vigorous and healthy virtue, with an eye keen to discern the boundaries between right and wrong; a hand strong and ready to help the transgressor out of his miserable condition; a heart full of mercy for the sinner and the sufferer; a disposition to forgive rather than revenge—to relieve rather than to aggravate—to conceal rather than to expose—to be kind rather than severe—to be hopeful of good rather than suspicious of evil. But nevertheless, true Christian love is the inflexible, immutable friend of holiness—and the equally inflexible and immutable enemy of sin!

We are not allowed, it is true, to be scornful and proud towards the wicked, nor censorious towards anyone. We are not to make the most distant approach to the proud disposition which says, "Stand aside! I am holier than you!" We are not to hunt for the failings of others; nor when we see them, without hunting for them, to condemn them in a tone of arrogance, or with a scathing or sarcastic spirit. But still we must maintain that disposition, which while it reflects the beauty of a God of love—no less brightly reflects his glory, as a God of holiness and a God of truth!

The Indispensible Necessity of Christian Love

A distinction has been introduced into the subject of true religion, which, although not wholly free from objection, is sufficient to answer the purpose for which it is employed. I mean the distinction between essentials and non-essentials. It would be a difficult task to trace the boundary line by which these classes are divided; but the truth of the idea of "essentials and non-essentials" cannot be questioned. There are some things, both in faith and practice, which we may neglect, and yet not be destitute of true religion. While there are other things in faith and practice—the absence of which necessarily implies an unrenewed heart. Among the essentials of true piety must be reckoned the disposition we are now considering—Christian love.

Christian love is not to be classed with those observances and views, which, though important, are not absolutely essential to salvation. We must possess true Christian love, or we are not Christians now, and shall not be admitted into heaven hereafter. The apostle has expressed this necessity in the clearest and the strongest manner. He has put an hypothetical case of the most impressive kind, which I shall now illustrate. "Though I speak with the tongues of men or of angels—and have not Love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."—verse 1.

By the tongues of men and of angels, we are not to understand the powers of the loftiest eloquence—but the miraculous gift of tongues, accompanied by an ability to convey ideas according to the method of celestial beings. Should a man be invested with these stupendous endowments, and employ them in the service of the gospel; yet if his heart were not a partaker of Christian love—he would be no more acceptable to God than was the clanging of the brazen instruments employed in the idolatrous worship of the Egyptian Isis, or the noise of the tinkling cymbals which accompanied the orgies of the Grecian Cybele. Such a man's profession of religion is not only worthless in the sight of God—but disagreeable and disgusting! The comparison is remarkably strong, inasmuch as it refers not to soft melodious sounds, as of the flute or of the harp, not to the harmonious chords

of a concert—but to the 'harsh dissonance' of instruments of the most inharmonious character. And if, as is probable, the allusion be to the noisy clank of idolatrous musicians, the idea is as strongly presented as it is possible for the force of language to express it.

"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 Love, I am nothing."—verse 2.

Paul still alludes to miraculous endowments. Prophecy in the Scripture use of the term is not limited to the foretelling of future events, but means to speak by inspiration of God; and its exercise in this instance, refers to the power of explaining without premeditation or mistake—the typical and predictive parts of the Old Testament dispensation, together with the facts and doctrines of the Christian economy.

"The faith that could remove mountains," is an allusion to an expression of our Lord's, which occurs in the gospel history; "Verily I say unto you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place—and it shall remove." This faith is of a distinct nature altogether from that by which men are justified and become the children of God. It has been called the 'faith of miracles', and seems to have consisted in a firm persuasion of the power or ability of God to do any miraculous thing for the support of the gospel. It operated two ways—the first was a belief on the part of the person who wrought the miracle, that he was the subject of a divine impulse, and called at that time to perform such an act; and the other was a belief on the part of the person on whom a miracle was about to be performed, that such an effect would be really produced. Now the apostle declared, that although a man had been gifted with prophecy, so as to explain the deepest mysteries of the Scripture, and in addition possessed that miraculous faith by which the most difficult and astonishing changes would have been effected—he was nothing, and less than nothing, without love.

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned—and have not Love, it profits me nothing."—Verse 3.

This representation of the indispensable necessity of Christian love is most striking. It supposes it possible that a man may distribute all his substance in acts of apparent beneficence—and yet after all be without true religion! Actions derive their moral character from the motives under the influence of which they are performed. Therefore, many actions which are beneficial to man, may still be sinful in the sight of God, because they are not done from a right motives! The most diffusive generosity—if prompted by pride, vanity or self-righteousness—is of no value in the eyes of the omniscient Jehovah! On the contrary, it is very sinful!

It is too evident to be questioned, that many of the charities of which we are the witnesses, are done from any motives but the right ones. We readily see that multitudes are lavish in their monetary contributions, who are at the same time totally destitute of love to God, and love to man—and if destitute of these sacred virtues, they are, as it respects real religion, less than nothing, although they should spend every penny of their property in relieving the needs of the poor. If our munificence, however great or self-denying, be the operation of mere selfish regard to ourselves, to our own reputation, or to our own safety, and not of pure love, it may do good to others, but will do none to ourselves!

"And though I give my body to be burned," that is, as a martyr to true religion, "and have not love, it profits me nothing." Whether such a case as this ever existed we know not—it is not impossible, nor improbable. But if it did, not the tortures of an agonizing death, nor the courage which endured them, nor the seeming zeal for religion which led to them—would be accepted in lieu of true love to man. Such an instance of self-devotedness must have been the result either of that self-righteousness, which substitutes its own sufferings for those of Christ; or of that 'love of fame' which scruples not to seek it

even in the fires of martyrdom! In either case it partakes not of the nature, nor will receive the reward, of true religion.

It will help to convince us, not only of the necessity of true Christian love, but of the importance of this temper of mind—if we bring into a narrow compass the many and various representations of it, which are to be found in the New Testament.

1. Love is the object of the Divine decree in predestination. "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will."

2. True Christian love is the end and purpose of the moral law. "The end of the commandment is love." "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment and the second is like unto it—You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

3. True Christian love is the evidence of regeneration. "Love is of God, and everyone who loves, is born of God."

4. True Christian love is the necessary operation and effect of saving faith. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love."

5. True Christian love is that grace by which both personal and mutual edification is promoted. "Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies." "Makes increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love."

6. True Christian love is the proof of a mutual inhabitation between God and his people. "If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have known

and believed the love that God has to us. God is love; and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him."

7. True Christian love is declared to be the greatest of all the Christian virtues. "The greatest of these is love!"

8. True Christian love is represented as the perfection of true religion. "Above all these things put on love—which is the bond of perfectness."

What eulogies are these! What striking proofs of the supreme importance of Christian love! Who has not been guilty of some neglect of it? Who has not had his attention drawn too much from it? Who can read these passages of Holy Writ, and not feel convinced that not only mankind in general, but the professors of spiritual religion also, have too much mistaken the nature of true piety? What are clear and orthodox views—what are strong feelings—what is our faith—what our enjoyment—what our freedom from gross immorality—without this spirit of pure and universal Christian love?

Whether an instance, we again repeat, ever existed of an individual whose circumstances answered to the supposition of the apostle, we cannot determine; the statement certainly suggests to us a most alarming idea of our liability to self-deception in reference to our personal religion. Delusion on the nature of true piety prevails to a

truly appalling extent! Millions are in error as to the real condition of their souls, and think that they are journeying to celestial bliss; when in reality they are traveling to perdition! Oh fearful mistake! Oh fatal delusion! What terrible disappointment awaits them! What horror, and anguish, and despair, will take eternal possession of their souls, in that moment of truth, when instead of awaking from the sleep of death amid the glories of the heavenly city—they shall lift up their eyes, "being in torment!" No pen can describe the overwhelming anguish of such a disappointment! The imagination shrinks with

amazement and horror. from the contemplation of her own faint sketch of the unendurable scene!

To be led on by the 'power of delusion' so far as to commit an error of consequence to our temporal interests; to have impaired our health, our reputation, or our property—is sufficiently painful, especially where there is no prospect, or but a faint one, of repairing the harm. Yet, in this case, true religion opens a balm for the wounded spirit, and eternity presents a prospect, where the sorrows of time will be forgotten! But, O! to be in error on the nature of true religion itself, and to build our hope of immortality on the sand, instead of the rock; to see the lamp of our deceitful profession, which had served to illumine us in life, and even to guide us in false peace through the dark valley of the shadow of death, suddenly extinguished as we cross the threshold of eternity, and leaving us in rayless, endless night—instead of quietly expiring amid the blaze of everlasting day! What horror!

Is such a delusion possible? Has it ever happened in one solitary instance? Do the annals of the unseen world record one such case, and the prison of lost souls contain one miserable spirit that perished by delusion? Then what deep solicitude ought the possibility of such an event to circulate through the hearts of all—to avoid the error of a self-deceived mind. Is it possible to be mistaken in our judgment, of our eternal state? Then how deeply anxious ought we all to feel, not to be misled by false criteria in forming our decision. But what if, instead of one case, millions should have occurred—of souls irrecoverably lost by self-deception? What if delusion should be the most crowded avenue to the bottomless pit? What if self-delusion should be the common infatuation, the epidemic blindness, which has fallen upon multitudes of the inhabitants of Christendom?

What if this 'moral insanity' should have infected and destroyed very many who have made even a stricter profession of true religion than others? How shall we explain, much more justify—that lack of concern about their everlasting welfare—that destitution of care to

examine into the nature and evidences of true piety—that willingness to be deluded, in reference to eternity—which many exhibit? Jesus Christ does tell us that "MANY, in that day, shall say, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name?" to whom he will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you, you workers of iniquity!" He says that "MANY are called, but few chosen." He says that of the four classes of those who hear the word, only one hears it to advantage. He says that of the ten virgins, to whom he likens the kingdom of heaven, only five were wise, while the other five were deceiving themselves with the oil-less lamp of a deceitful profession! He intimates most plainly that self-deception in religion is fearfully common—and common among those who make a more serious profession than others!

It is Jesus who has sounded the alarm to awaken slumbering professors of religion from their carnal security. It is he who has said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." "I know your works, how that you have a name that you live—but are dead." How careful, then, ought we to be, not to be deluded by false evidences of religion, and to conclude that we are Christians—while we are destitute of those things which the Word of God declares to be essential to genuine piety. We must possess true Christian love, therefore—or all else is insufficient.

1. Some conclude, that because they are regular in their ATTENDANCE upon church services—that they are true Christians. They go punctually to church or to meetings—they receive the Lord's supper—they frequent the meetings for prayer—they perhaps repeat prayers in secret, and read the Scriptures. All this is well—if it be done with right views—and in connection with right dispositions of the heart. But it is the 'whole' of their religion? Is it a mere abstraction of devotional exercise? Is it a thing separate and apart from the heart, and temper, and conduct? Is it a 'formal business' of the closet, and of the sanctuary? Is it a sort of penance paid to the Almighty, to be released from all the other demands of Scripture, and obligations of piety? Is it an expression of their willingness to be devout in the church, and on the Sabbath—provided they may be as

earthly-minded, as selfish, as malicious, and as unkind, as they please, in all other places and all other times? This is not true religion!

2. Others are depending upon the clearness of their views, and their attainments in biblical KNOWLEDGE. They have a singular zeal for the truth, and are great sticklers for the doctrines of grace, of which they profess to have an acquaintance, little short of inspiration! They look upon all, besides a few of their own class, as mere babes in knowledge, or as individuals who, like the man in the gospel, have their eyes only half open, and who see "men as trees walking." They are the eagles who soar to the sun, and bask in its beams, while the rest of mankind are the moles that burrow, and the bats that flutter in the dark. Doctrine is everything; clear views of the gospel are their great desire—and in their zeal for these things, they suppose they can never say things extravagant enough, nor absurd enough, nor angry enough, against good works, practical religion, or Christian temper. Puffed up with pride, selfish, unkind, irritable, censorious, malicious—they manifest a total lack of that humility and kindness which are the prominent features of true Christianity.

Let it be known, however, that clear views of Scripture—even where they have no resemblance to the monstrous caricatures and frightful deformities of modern Antinomianism—are of themselves no evidence of true religion—any more than right theoretical notions of the constitution, are the proofs of patriotism. And as a man with these notions in his mind, may be a traitor in his heart—so may a professor of religion be an enemy to God in his soul—with an evangelical creed upon his tongue!

Many profess to be very fond of the 'lamp of truth'—grasp it firmly in their hands, admire its flame—and pity or blame those who are following the delusive and meteoric fires of error. But after all, they make no other use of the 'lamp of truth', than to illuminate the path that leads them to perdition! Their religion begins and ends in adopting a form of sound words for their creed, approving an

evangelical ministry, admiring the popular champions of the truth, and joining in the criticism of error. As to any spirituality of mind, any heavenliness of affection, any Christian love—in short, as to any of the natural tendency, the appropriate energy, the vital, elevating influence, of those very doctrines to which they profess to be attached—they are as destitute as the greatest worldling; and like him, are perhaps as selfish, revengeful, implacable, and unkind!

This is the religion but too common in the present day, when evangelical sentiments are becoming increasingly popular; a religion but too common in our churches—a cold, heartless, and uninfluential religion; a sort of lunar light, which reflects the beams of the sun, but not its warmth.

3. On the other hand, some are satisfied with the vividness and the intensity of their FEELINGS. Possessed of much excitability and warmth of temperament, they are, of course, susceptible of deep and powerful impressions from true religion. They are not without joy, for even the stony-ground hearers rejoiced for awhile; and they are not without their religious sorrows. Their tears are plentiful, and their smiles in proportion. See them in the house of God, and none appear to feel more under the preaching of the word than they do. The sermon exerts an influential power over their affections, and the preacher seems to have their hearts at command. They talk loudly of "happy frames," "precious seasons," "comfortable opportunities."

But follow them from the house of God to their own homes—and, O, how changed the scene! The least offence, perhaps an unintentional one, raises a storm of passion, and the man who looked like a seraph in the sanctuary—seems more like a demon at home! Follow them from the Sabbath into the days of the week, and you will see the man who appeared all for heaven on the Sunday—all for earth on the Monday! Follow them from the assembly of the saints to the chief places of business, where they buy, and sell, and get gain—and you will see the man who looked so devout, now irritated and quarrelsome, selfish and unfair, crude and insulting, envious and

malicious, untrusting and defamatory! Yes! And perhaps in the evening of the same day, you will see him at a prayer meeting, enjoying, as he supposes, the holy season. Such is the delusion under which many are living. Their religion is, in great part, a mere susceptibility of impression from religious subjects! It is a selfish religious voluptuousness!

It is certain, that more importance is oftentimes attached to "sensible enjoyment," as it is called—to lively frames and feelings—than belongs to them. There is a great variety in the constitution of the human mind, not only as it respects the power of thinking, but also of feeling; some feel far more acutely than others—this is observable even in natural things.

The grace of God, in conversion, operates a moral, not a physical change. The grace of God, in conversion, gives a new direction to the faculties, but leaves the faculties themselves as they were. Consequently, with equal depth of conviction and equal strength of principle, there will be various degrees of feeling in different people. The susceptibility of the mind to strong emotions, and its liability to vivid feeling—were there before conversion—and they remain after it. And oftentimes the lively emotion produced by affecting scenes, or seasons, or sermons, is partly an operation of nature—and partly of grace! A man may feel but little, and yet if that little leads him to do much—it is great piety notwithstanding!

Two people are listening to a sad and touching account—one is seen to weep profusely, and is overwhelmed by the story. The other is attentive and thoughtful, but neither weeps nor sobs. They retire—the former, perhaps, to wipe her tears, and to forget the misery which caused them; the latter to seek out the sufferer and relieve him. Which had most 'feeling'? The former! Which had most 'true benevolence'? The latter! The conduct of one was the result of an emotional nature! The conduct of the other the effect of pious principle.

Take another illustration, still more in point. Conceive of two real Christians listening to a sermon, in which the preacher is discoursing from such a text as this—"Beloved; if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another," or this—"You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich." His object, as that of every man should be, who preaches from such a text—is to show that a sense of divine love to us, should fill us with benevolence towards others. In order to bring the heart to feel its obligations, he gives a vivid description of God's love to man; and then, while his hearers are affected with God's mercy, he calls upon them (in imitation of Jehovah's love to them), to relieve those who are in poverty; to bear with those who are vexatious; to forgive those who have injured them; to lay aside their wrath, and abound in all expressions of genuine affection to their fellow-Christians.

One of the individuals is deeply interested and affected by the first part of the discourse, sheds many tears, and is wrought up to a high pitch of feeling—while the preacher paints in glowing colors the love of God. The other person hears with fixed attention, with genuine faith, the whole sermon, but his emotions are not powerful—he feels, it is true, but it is a tranquil feeling, unattended by either smiles or tears. They both go home; the latter perhaps in silence, the former exclaiming to his friends, "Oh what a delightful sermon! what a precious season! did you ever hear the love of God so impressively, so beautifully described?" With all his feeling, however, he does not go forth to relieve one child of poverty, nor does he attempt to extinguish one angry or implacable feeling towards an individual who has offended him. He is as angry and unforgiving, as unkind and selfish, after the sermon—as he was before he heard it!

The other person retires with more of calm reflection, than of strong emotion. Harken to his soliloquy—"The preacher has given us a most astonishing idea of the love of God to us, and most clearly and effectually deduced from it our obligations to love one another. Am I saved this great love? What! has this ineffable grace lavished all its

benefits on me, a rebel against God—upon me, a sinner? And shall I not feel this love constraining me to relieve the needs, to heal the sorrows, to forgive the offences of my fellow-creatures? I will bear ill-will no longer! I will put out the kindling spark of revenge! I will go in a spirit of meekness and of love, and forgive the offender, and be reconciled to my brother." By that grace on which he depended, he is enabled to act up to his resolution. He becomes, upon principle, upon conviction—more merciful, more meek, more affectionate. Which has most 'feeling'? The former. Which has most 'true religion'? The latter!

Any emotion, however pleasurable and intense, that does not lead to action, is 'mere natural feeling', not holy piety. While that emotion, however feeble it may seem, which leads us to do the will of God—is sincere piety. In order to ascertain our degree of true religion, we must not merely ask how we feel under sermons—but how this feeling leads us to act afterwards. The operative strength of our principles—and not the contemplative strength of our feelings—is the test of godliness. All that imaginative emotion, produced by a sense of God's love to us, which does not lead to a cultivation of the virtue considered in this treatise—is one of the delusive fires—which, instead of guiding aright, misleads the souls of men.

4. It is to be feared that many, in the present day, satisfy themselves that they are Christians, because of their ZEAL in the cause of religion. Happily for the church of God, happily for the world at large—there is now a great and general eagerness for the diffusion of biblical knowledge. Throwing off the torpor of ages, the friends of Christ are laboring to extend his kingdom in every direction. Almost every possible object of Christian philanthropy is seized upon; societies are organized; means adapted to every kind of plan; instruments are employed; the whole mass of the religious world is called out—and Christendom presents an interesting scene of benevolent energy. Such a state of things, however, has its dangers in reference to personal religion, and may become an occasion of delusion to many.

It does not require genuine piety to associate us with these religious movements and societies. From a natural liberality of disposition, or regard to reputation, or a desire of influence, or by the compulsion of example—we may give our money.

And as to personal exertions, how many inducements may lead to this, without a sincere and an ardent love to Christ in the heart! An inherent fondness for activity, a love of display, a party-spirit, the persuasion of friends—may all operate—and unquestionably do operate in many cases—to produce astonishing effects in the cause of religious benevolence—there is a total absence of genuine piety!

The mind of man, prone to self-deception, and anxious to find some reasons to satisfy itself in reference to its eternal state, short of the true evidence of a renewed heart—is too apt to derive a false peace from the contemplation of its zeal. In proportion as the cause of the delusion approximates to the nature of true religion—is its power to blind and to mislead the judgment. If the mind can perceive anything in itself, or in its operations—which bears the semblance of godliness—it will convert it into a means of lulling the conscience, and removing anxiety! To many people the fatal opiate—the soul-destroying delusion—is their activity in the cause of Christian zeal! None are more diligent in their devotedness to the duties of committees—none are more constant in their attendance upon public meetings—others again weary themselves in their weekly rounds to collect the contributions of the rich, or the offerings of the poor.

These things, if they do not lead them coolly to reason, and to conclude that they are believers—take off their attention from the real condition of their souls—leave them no leisure for reflection—repress the rising fear, and either stifle the voice of conscience, or enable them to drown its remonstrances in the eloquence of the platform, or in the discussions of the committee room. We doubt not that some unworthy professors of religion in the present age resort to public meetings for the same reason as many a guilty votary of pleasure does, to public amusements—to forget his own condition,

and to turn away his ear, for a short season, from the voice that speaks to him from within. Individuals are known to us all, who, amid the greatest zeal for various public institutions, are living in malice and all uncharitableness, in the indulgence of a predominant selfishness and uncontrolled wrath. But it will not do. This is not Christian piety. Could we support the whole expenditure of the Missionary Society by our affluence, and direct its counsels by our wisdom, and keep alive its energy by our ardor, and yet at the same time were destitute of love—we would perish eternally, amid the munificence of our liberality.

And of those who have the grace of love, and who are real believers, some are far more deficient in its influence and activity than they should be—and endeavor to quiet an accusing conscience with the wretched sophistry, "that as a Christian cannot be supposed to excel in everything, their forte lies in the active virtues of true religion, more than in the passive graces; and that, therefore, any little deficiency in the latter is made up by their greater abundance of the former." This reasoning is as false in its principle, as it is frequent, we fear, in its adoption. Where, in all the Word of God, is this species of moral composition of duties taught or sanctioned? This is really carrying the Popish error of indulgences into our own private concerns, and creating a surplus stock of one virtue to be available for the deficiencies of another.

It is to be apprehended, that as every age is marked with a peculiar tendency, either to some prevailing error or defect, the tendency of the present age is to exalt the active virtues of piety, at the expense of the passive ones; and, while the former is forced into an increasing luxuriance, to permit the latter to wither in their shade; or, at least, there is a disposition to devote all that time and attention to the culture of one, which ought to be shared between both. It cannot be denied that our love of activity and of display, will generally incline us to prefer the cultivation of public spirit, rather than the more private and self-denying tempers of meekness, humility, and forbearance; for it is inconceivably more easy, and more pleasant, to

float upon the tide of public feeling toward the objects of religious zeal, than to wade against the stream of our own corrupt tendencies, and to accomplish an end which He only who sees in secret will duly appreciate.

5. May it not be said, that in many cases a PROFESSION of religion seems to release some individuals from all obligation to cultivate the dispositions which it necessarily implies; who, instead of deriving from this circumstance a stimulus to seek after the Christian temper, find in it a reason for general negligence?

They have been admitted as members of a dissenting church, and have thus received, as it were, a certificate of personal religion; and instead of being anxious from that moment to excel in every virtue that can adorn the doctrine of God their Savior, they sink into carelessness and lukewarmness. A profession of religion, unsupported by Christian love, will only increase our guilt here, and sink us immeasurably lower in the bottomless pit hereafter. Woe, eternal woe, will be upon that man who bears the name of our Lord Jesus—without his image. Woe, eternal woe, will be upon those members of our churches who are content to find their way into the fellowship of the faithful, without adding to their character the luster of this sacred virtue.

Thus have we shown how many things there are, which, though good in themselves, when performed from right motives, and in connection with other parts of true religion, cannot, in the absence of love, be depended upon as unequivocal evidences of personal piety. Let us beware of self-deception in this awfully important business; for it will be dreadful beyond the power of imagination to conceive of, to find ourselves the next moment after death amid the horrors of the infernal pit, instead of the felicities of the celestial city!

Love is required by God as an essential part of true religion; and the total absence of it as necessarily prevents a man from being a true Christian, as the lack of temperance or purity. Besides, love is the

temper of heaven. Love is the unvarying state of mind in the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. Love is the heart of Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and the image of God, the Judge of all. Without love, there would be no fitness for the society of paradise, no fitness for an association of which the bond of fellowship is love. Without love, there can be no grace here—and therefore no glory hereafter!

The Properties of Christian Love

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." 1 Cor. 13:4-8

By a beautiful personification, the Apostle has described this grace under the figure of an interesting female, who, like an angel of light, lifts her cherubic form and smiling countenance amid the children of men; shedding, as she passes along, a healing influence on the wounds of society, hushing the notes of discord, driving before her the spirits of mischief, bringing the graces in her train, and converting earth into a resemblance of heaven. Her charms are sufficient to captivate every heart, if every heart were as it should be; and her influence such as every mind should court.

1. The first remark which I make on these properties, is, that they describe such expressions of our love as have a particular reference to our TEMPER.

By the temper, we mean the prevailing spirit and disposition of the mind, as it respects the irritable or selfish affections. If we examine,

we shall find that all the qualities here enumerated bear on these dispositions. There are other operations and manifestations of love, besides those which are here specified—such, for instance, as justice and chastity—for it is impossible to love mankind, and violate the rules of either of these duties—but the apostle restricts his specification to those properties of it, which are comprehended in the word temper. Nothing surely can teach more clearly, or more impressively, the great truth—that true religion must govern the temper—than this chapter.

It is strange, but true, that many seem to think that temper is a part of man's self and conduct, over which true religion has no legal jurisdiction. They admit their obligations to be holy, and moral, and devout; but they do not feel, at least do not acknowledge, that it is their duty to be meek, gentle, and kind. They may not affirm so much in words, but it is the secret and tacit system of conduct which they have adopted.

Hence it is, that although they are correct in their morals, and regular in their attendance on the means of grace, they are withal so apt to receive offense, and so forward to give it; they are either so passionate, or so sullen; so implacable or revengeful—that the real excellencies of their character are lost sight of in the deep shadow of their infirmities, and the ways of godliness are spoken ill of, on their account. This arises from their not being sufficiently convinced of the evil of such infirmities; and this blindness itself is the consequence of a supposition, that the removal of the evil is physically impossible. "Our temper," say they, "is as much a part of ourselves, as the color of our skin, or the makeup of our body; it is naturally inherent in us, and we cannot help it." As long as this is the conviction of the judgment—or the admission of a deceitful heart—it is almost vain to hope for a reformation. But let us reason with such people.

It must be admitted that there do exist constitutional tendencies to the exercise of particular passions—without being able to account for these effects, or whether the cause be wholly in the body or partly in

the mind—the effects are too obvious to be denied. No, these constitutional tendencies are no less hereditary, sometimes, than direct physical disease. One man is naturally propensity to anger; another to sullenness; a third to envy; a fourth to pride—all this is indisputable. But these sinful tendencies are not uncontrollable! They are impulses, but not constraints; incitements, but not compulsions. It would subvert the whole system of moral obligation, to suppose that we were under a physical necessity of sinning—which we certainly should be, if inherent tendencies were beyond the power of moral restraint. That cannot be duty, which a man could not do if he would; nor can that be sin, which he cannot avoid by any exercise of disposition or will.

If, therefore, we cannot help indulging revenge, envy, pride, unkindness, they are no sins; and in this case, would such vices have been condemned, if there were an impossibility in the way of avoiding them? Certainly not. It is no actual sin to have the liability—the guilt consists in indulging it!

If the existence of constitutional propensities be an excuse for their indulgence, the lecherous man may plead it in justification of his sensuality; for he may have stronger incitement to his besetting sin, than many others who run not to the same excess of riot. But if lechery or cruelty cannot be excused on this ground—why should anger, revenge, or envy? Once let it be granted that natural physical tendency is an excuse for any kind of sinful indulgence, no matter of what kind, and you overturn the whole system of Christian morals!

Besides, natural propensities of the most impetuous kinds have been, in innumerable instances, not only successfully resisted—but almost entirely vanquished. We have known people who were once addicted to all kinds of vile impure gratifications, but who have become as distinguished for chastity as they were once for lewdness. Drunkards have become sober; men as furious as enraged tigers, have become gentleness itself. It is said of that eminently holy and useful man, Mr. Fletcher, of Madeley, "that he was meek like his Master, as well as

lowly in heart. Not that he was so by nature, but a man of strong passions, and prone to anger in particular; inasmuch that he has frequently spent the greater part of the night bathed in tears, imploring victory over his own spirit. And he did not strive in vain. He did obtain the victory in a very eminent degree. Yes, so thoroughly had grace subdued nature; so fully was he renewed in the spirit of his mind—that for many years before his death, I believe he was never observed by anyone, friend or foe, to be out of temper on any provocation whatever."

The testimony that Burnet bears of Leighton, might be borne of him with equal propriety. "After an intimate acquaintance with Leighton for many years, and after being with him by night and by day, at home and abroad, in public and in private, I must say I never heard an idle word drop from his lips; I never saw him in any temper in which I myself would not have wished to be found at death." What a character! What a testimony! But it is not the beauty, the inexpressible moral loveliness of it alone which should be remarked; but the convincing proof which it furnishes that a naturally bad temper may be subdued! So many instances of people conquering sinful propensities exist, that the man who indulges in a sinful constitutional tendency of any kind, under the mistaken idea that it is absolutely invincible and altogether irresistible—accumulates only reproach upon himself.

That everything which pertains to our physical nature will remain after our conversion, is true, for grace produces no change in the bodily organization; and that occasional ebullitions of inherent natural temper will occur in our renewed state, is allowed—for very few attain to Mr. Fletcher's eminence of piety. But if we are as passionate and revengeful, as proud and envious, as selfish and unkind, as we were before our supposed conversion, we may be assured that it is but a supposed conversion. It is nothing that we go regularly to worship—it is nothing that we strongly feel under sermons—it is nothing that we have happy frames and feelings; for a heart under the predominant influence of petulant passions can no

more have undergone the change of the new birth, than one that is filled with a prevailing lecherousness. And where the heart is renewed, and the badness of the temper is not constant, but only occasional—is not prevailing, but only prominent—it is, in so far as it prevails, a sad blot on real piety.

True it is, that inherent natural tendency to a vice, will require more vigorous resistance and unsleeping vigilance, more laborious effort, more painful mortification, more earnest prayer—on the part of those who are conscious of it, than is necessary on theirs in whom it does not exist. It is not uncommon for such people to be contented with a few feeble struggles, and then to flatter themselves with the idea that there is more grace displayed in those efforts than in the conduct of others, who, being naturally good-tempered, are never exposed to their temptations. To adorn true religion will certainly cost them far more labor than it does those of a better natural temper; just as a man afflicted with a weakly constitution, or a chronic disease, must take more pains with himself than one who has sound health—and he will, after all, look more sickly than the other. But as his bodily malady does exist, he must give himself this more laborious effort—or he cannot rationally expect the least share of health.

So it is with the soul; if the disease of any evil temper is there, immense and unwearied pains must be taken to resist and repress it. This is what is meant by our "plucking out a right eye, or cutting off a right hand," by "denying ourselves," by "mortifying the deeds of the body," by "the spirit struggling against the flesh," by "casting aside every weight, and the sin which does most easily beset us." The subjection of our temper to the control of true religion, is a thing which must be done. It is that to which we must apply as to a matter of indispensable necessity; it is an object which we must accomplish by any mortification of feeling—and by any expenditure of labor. The virtues which we are about to consider will spring up in no soil without strenuous culture! But there are some soils peculiarly unfriendly to their growth, and in which productions of an opposite

kind thrive spontaneously, and grow with frightful profuseness! With these greater pains must be taken, and greater patience exercised, until at length the beautiful imagery of the prophet shall be realized—"Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow. Where briars grew, myrtles will sprout up. This miracle will bring great honor to the Lord's name; it will be an everlasting sign of his power and love." Isaiah 55:13

But for effecting such a transformation there must be a degree of labor and pains-taking, which very few are willing to endure—"This kind goes not forth but by prayer and fasting."

To obtain this victory over ourselves, much time must be spent in the closet—much communion with God must be maintained—much strong crying with tears must be poured forth. We must undergo what the apostle calls by a term very appropriate, as well as strikingly descriptive, a "crucifixion,"—"we must crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof,"—"we must beat under our body." We must bring our mind, from time to time, under the influence of redeeming grace—we must ascend the hill of Calvary, and gaze upon that scene of love, until our cold hearts melt, our hard hearts soften, and all the cruel selfishness of our nature relaxes into gentleness. We must make all the doctrines of the gospel, with all the motives they contain, bear upon our nature—the example of the meek and lowly Jesus must be contemplated, admired, and copied. And especially after all must we breathe forth internal longings for the influence of the Holy Spirit, without whose aid our souls will no more yield to the influence of motive, than the polar ice will melt by the feeble beams of the great northern constellation. We must pray for the Spirit; long for the Spirit; expect the Spirit; live, walk, struggle in the Spirit. Thus must we set ourselves to work to obtain more of that love, which alone can subdue our evil temper.

2. The properties here enumerated are ALL included in love, and must ALL be sought by every real Christian.

The general disposition of biblical love, includes all these particular and distinct operations—and opposes all these separate evils. True love is as much opposed to envy as to revenge—and is as humble as it is kind. Consequently, we are not to select for ourselves such modes of its operation as we may think most adapted to our taste and to our circumstances—giving to these all our attention, and neglecting the rest. One is not to say, "I am most inclined to kindness, and I shall cherish this aspect of love—which I find to be more easy and pleasant than to cultivate humility and meekness." Another is not to say, "I find no great difficulty in forgiving injuries, and I shall practice this—but as for envy, I have such a great propensity to it, that I shall give up all attempts to eradicate this weed from my heart."

This parceling out of one disposition—and selecting that part which is most congenial to our constitutional tendency—will not do. Yet is the attempt made by many, who to appease in some measure the clamorous demands of their conscience, and at the same time to avoid the obligation of 'benevolence as a whole', thus impose upon themselves a supposed attention to some 'partial view' of the subject. They carry on a wretched and useless attempt to balance those points in which they succeed, against those in which they fail; their excellencies against their defects. It may be said, in reference to this law of our duty, as well as to the still more comprehensive one, that "He who offends but in one point is guilty of all," for that authority which says, "Be kind," says also, "You shall not think evil of your neighbor." These amiable properties must go together; the general principle which comprises them must be taken as a whole. It is one and indivisible, and as such must be received by us. "Love is the bond of perfectness." Like the band around the sheaf, it holds all the separate ears together. Instead, therefore, of allowing ourselves to select certain aspects—we must open our hearts to its whole and undivided influence. And if, indeed, there is one property of love, in which we are more than ordinarily deficient—to that one we must direct a still greater portion of our attention.

3. These properties are perfectly homogeneous. They are of the same nature, and are, therefore, helpful to each other. In reality, if we cultivate one, we are preparing the way for others. There is no contrariety of influence, no discordant operation, no clashing demands. When we are rooting up one evil by love, we drag up others with it. When we subdue pride, we weaken our susceptibility of offense. When we cherish kindness, we impoverish selfishness. This is an immense advantage in the cultivation of the Christian temper; and it shows us if there be one besetting sinful propensity in the heart, it draws all the energy of the mind to itself, and throws a dark and chilling shadow over the whole soul. The subjugation of this one bad temper will weaken many others that depend for existence upon its support; and make way for an opposite excellence, which is as extensively beneficial as the other was injurious. This is a powerful incentive to the arduous and necessary duty of self-improvement—an evil disposition eradicated, is a good one implanted; and one good one implanted is a way made for others to follow.

4. As these properties, while they are separate as to their nature, all unite in a common and universal disposition—our first and chief attention must be to that which is the common principle. These tempers are so many modes in which love operates—so many streams from a common fountain—so many branches from the same root. While, therefore, we seek to guide the separate streams, and trim the different branches aright, our care must be exercised chiefly in reference to the parent source. We must aim steadily, and labor constantly—at the increase of love itself. We must do everything we can to strengthen the principle of benevolence to man. In every step of our progress through the treatise before us, we must constantly keep in mind its connection with this great master principle. The way to abound in the effects—is to increase the power of the cause.

5. We are to recollect that these properties are to be expected, only in proportion to the degree in which love itself exists in the heart. On reading this chapter, and seeing what is required of the Christian, and comparing it with the usual conduct of religious people, we feel

almost involuntarily led to say, "If this be love, where then, except in heaven, is it to be found?" To this I reply, the apostle does not say that every man who pretends to this virtue acts thus—nor does he say that everyone who possesses it, acts thus in all instances—but that love itself does it. This is the way in which love acts—when allowed to exert its own energies. If love were allowed to have its full scope, and to bear sway in us without any check—this would be the invariable effect! Our not seeing, therefore, a perfect exemplification of this principle, is no proof that love does not possess these properties—but only that we are imperfectly under its influence.

This branch of piety, like every other, may be 'possessed in various degrees'—and of course it is only in proportion as we possess the disposition of love, that we shall manifest its operations. This should prepare us to distinguish between the utter lack of love—and the weakness of love; a distinction necessary for our proneness to despondency in reference to ourselves, and to censoriousness in reference to our neighbors.

The Meekness of Love

"Love suffers long."

"Love is not easily provoked."

I class these two together, because they bear a near affinity to each other. The word in the original translated "suffers long," signifies "to have a long mind," to the end of whose patience, provocations cannot easily reach. It does not mean patience in reference to the afflictions which come from God, but to the injuries and provocations which come from man. Perhaps the most correct idea which can attach to it is forbearance; a disposition which, under long-continued offenses, holds back anger, and is not hasty to punish or revenge.

Its kindred property, here classed with it, is nearly allied to it, is "not easily provoked," or "is not exasperated." The word signifies a violent emotion of the mind, a paroxysm of anger. So that the distinction between the two terms appears to be this—the property intended by the latter seems to be the power of love to curb our wrath—and that intended by the former, its ability to repress revenge.

There are three things which Christian love, in reference to the irascible passions, will prevent.

1. An IRRITABLE and PETULANT disposition. There is in some people an excessive liability to be easily offended—a morbid sensibility which is kindled to anger by the least possible injury, whether that injury is intentional or unintentional. They are all combustible—and ignite by a spark. A word, no, a look—is enough to inflame them. They are ever ready to quarrel with any or everybody. The whole soul seems one entire sensitiveness of offense. Instead of "suffering long," they are not patient at all; and instead of not being easily provoked, they are provoked by anything—and sometimes by nothing. Love will prevent all this, and produce a disposition the very reverse.

Love is concerned for the happiness of others; and will not wantonly afflict them and render them wretched, by such an exhibition of unlovely and unchristian temper. Love will remove this diseased sensibility, and without blunting the natural feelings, will calm this sinful excitability. There are many things which love will not see or hear—judging them quite beneath its dignity to notice. Other things, love will pass by, as not of sufficient consequence to require explanation. Love will keep a strict guard over its feelings, holding the rein with a tight hand.

Love's first business is with its own temper and disposition. This is important for us to notice; for if we indulge the feeling of anger, it will be impossible to smother the flame in our bosom—like the

burning materials of a volcano, it will at length burst out in fiery eruptions.

Here then is our first object, to gain that forbearance of disposition which does not allow itself to be irritated or soured; to acquire that command, not only over our words and actions—but over our emotions—which shall make us patient and tranquil amid insults and injuries—which shall keep down the irritated temper of the soul, and preserve the greatest coolness. Irritability, I know, is in part a physical quality; but it is in our power, by God's help, to calm it. Love will make us willing to think the best of those with whom we have to do; it will disarm us of that suspicion and mistrust which make us regard everybody as intending to injure us; will cause us to find out pleas for those who have done us harm; and when this is impossible, will lead us to pity their weakness or forgive their wickedness.

What an enemy to himself is an irritable man! He is a self-tormentor of the worst kind. He is scarcely ever at peace. His bosom is always in a state of tumult. To him the 'calm sunshine of the bosom' is unknown. A thousand petty vexations disturb his repose—trivial, but withal as tormenting, as the gnats which by myriads inflict their stings upon the poor animal which is exposed to their attack. Unhappy man! even though he so far succeeds as to restrain the agitations of his mind from bursting out into passion—yet he has the burning within. Regard to his own happiness—as well as the happiness of others—calls upon him to cultivate that love which shall allay the inflammatory state of his mind, and restore a soundness which will not be thus wounded by every touch.

2. The next thing which love prevents is immoderate ANGER—that anger which the apostle has described in the expression we are now elucidating, as amounting to a fit of wrath—or which in ordinary language we call, "being in a passion." It would be to oppose both reason and revelation to assert that all anger is sin. "Be angry," says the apostle, "and sin not." An intense suppression of the natural feelings is not perhaps the best expedient for obviating their

injurious effects. And though nothing requires a more vigilant restraint than the emotion of anger, the uneasiness of which it is productive is perhaps best allayed by its natural and temperate expression. Not to say that it is a wise provision in the economy of nature, for the repression of injury, and the preservation of the peace and decorum of society. A wise and temperate expression of our displeasure against injuries or offenses, is by no means incompatible with Christian love; this grace intending only to check those furious sallies of our wrath which are tormenting to ourselves, and injurious to those with whom we have to do.

Sinful anger is lamentably common, and is not sufficiently subdued among the professors of true religion. In cases of offense they are too often excited to criminal degrees of passion; their countenance is flushed, their brow lowers, their eyes dart indignant flashes, and their tongue pours forth loud and stormy words of reviling accusations. To diminish and prevent this disposition, let us dwell much upon the EVIL CONSEQUENCES of anger.

Anger disturbs our peace, and interrupts our happiness—and this is an evil about which we ought not to be indifferent. A passionate man cannot be a happy man; he is the victim of a temper, which, like a serpent, dwells in his bosom to sting and torment him.

Anger destroys the comfort of those with whom he has to do—his children often bear the fury of the tempest; his wife has her cup of marital felicity embittered by the gall; his servants tremble at the rage of a tyrant; and those with whom he transacts the business of this life dread the gusts of his passion, by which they have often been rendered uncomfortable. He is a common disturber of the circle in which he moves.

Anger interrupts his enjoyment of true religion, brings guilt upon his conscience, and unfits him for communion with God. A beautiful illustration of this part of the subject may be here introduced from one of the most striking of English writers—"Prayer is the peace of

our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the evenness of our recollection, the seat of meditation, the rest of our cares, and the calm of our tempest. Prayer is the outcome of a quiet mind, of untroubled thoughts. Prayer is the daughter of love, and the sister of meekness—and he who prays to God with an angry, that is, with a troubled and discomposed spirit, is like him that retires into battle to meditate, and sets up his closet in the out quarters of an army, and chooses a frontier garrison to be wise in. Anger is a total alienation of the mind from prayer—and therefore is contrary to that intention which presents our prayers in a right line to God. For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven and climb above the clouds—but the poor bird was beaten back by the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant—descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it could recover by the frequent flapping of its wings; until the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay until the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed some times through the air about his ministries here below. So is the prayer of a good man—when his affairs have required business, and his business was matter of discipline, and his discipline was to pass upon a sinning person, or had a design of love; his duty met with the infirmities of a man, and anger was its instrument; and the instrument became stronger than the prime agent, and raised a tempest, and overruled the man; and then his prayer was broken, and his thoughts were troubled, and his words went up towards a cloud, and his thoughts pulled them back again, and made them without intention; and the good man sighs for his infirmity, but must be content to lose the prayer; and he must recover it when his anger is removed, and his spirit is becalmed—made even as the brow of Jesus, and smooth as the heart of God; and then it ascends to heaven upon the wings of the holy dove, and dwells with God until it returns, like the useful bee, laden with a blessing and the dew of heaven." (Jeremy Taylor)

Sinful anger dishonors true religion, and causes the ways of godliness to be spoken ill of. The mists of passion envelop religion with a dense medium through which its luster is but dimly seen. A passionate Christian is an object of sport to the profane, a butt of ridicule to fools, whose scorn is reflected from him upon piety itself.

But perhaps it will be said—"Tell us how we may CURE this disposition; its existence we admit, and its evil we know by experience, and deplore." I say then—

Look at anger as it really is—attentively consider its evil nature, and trace its mischievous consequence. "Anger sets the house on fire, and all the spirits are busy upon trouble, and starts displeasure and revenge. Anger is a 'temporary insanity', and an eternal enemy to discourse, and sober counsels, and fair conversation. Anger is a fever in the heart, and a disorder in the head, and a fire in the face, and a sword in the hand, and a fury all over. It has in it the trouble of sorrow, and the heats of lust, and the disease of revenge. If it proceeds from a great cause, it turns to fury. If it proceeds from a small cause, it is peevishness. And so it is always terrible or ridiculous. It makes a man's body deformed and contemptible—the voice horrid, the eyes cruel, the face pale or fiery, the gait fierce. It is neither manly nor wise, and is a passion fitter for flies and wasps than for people professing nobleness and goodness. It is a gathering of all the vile passions. There is in it envy and scorn, fear and sorrow, pride and prejudice, rashness and inconsideration, rejoicing in evil, and a desire to inflict it." (Jeremy Taylor)

Such is the portraiture of this disposition, drawn by the hand of no inconsiderable artist. Let the angry man look at the picture, and learn to hate it; for, like an infuriated serpent, it need only to be seen to be abhorred.

Let us reject all excuses for the indulgence of it—for so long as we extenuate it, we shall not attempt to mortify it. It cannot be defended either on the ground of constitutional tendency—or the greatness of

the provocation—or the suddenness of the offense, or the transient duration of the fit—or that there is less evil in gusts of anger than in seasons of sullenness. No! Nothing can justify it; and if we are sincere in our desires to control it, we shall admit that it is indefensible and criminal—and condemn it without hesitation or extenuation.

We must be persuaded that it is possible to control it—for if we despair of victory, we shall not engage in the conflict. Hope of success is essential to success itself.

It is certain that by using right means, a hasty temper may be subdued, for it has been conquered in very many instances. It is said of Socrates, the wisest and most virtuous of the heathen sages, that in the midst of domestic vexations and public disorders, he maintained such an undisturbed serenity, that he was never seen to leave his own house or return to it with a ruffled countenance. If on any occasion he felt a propensity to anger, he checked the rising storm by lowering the tone of his voice, and resolutely assuming a more than usual gentleness of aspect and manner. He not only refrained from acts of revenge, but triumphed over his adversaries by disregarding the insults and injuries they offered him. This was more remarkable, as in acquiring this dominion over his passions, he had to struggle against natural propensities which ran in an opposite direction. Let professing Christians learn from this distinguished heathen, that it is possible to subdue natural temper, however bad and however violent it may be!

Make its cure a matter of desire. What we ardently long for—we shall vigorously pursue. Confess your sin—frankly say, "I am indeed too irritable, too passionate, too revengeful. I see the sinfulness of indulging such a temper; I am disturbed and disgraced by it; and by God's help I will subdue it. I will spare no pains, shrink from no sacrifice, be discouraged by no defeat—until I gain the victory over myself!"

Meditate upon the patience of God, who bears with your innumerable offenses against Him, and forgives them all. Consider the example of Jesus Christ, who meekly endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; and amid ingratitude, insults, and provocations of the basest kind—was mild as the morning sun in autumn.

Seek to acquire a habit of self control—a power over your feelings, which shall enable you to be ever on your guard, and to repress the first emotions of passion. If possible, seal your lips in silence when the storm is rising. Shut up your anger in your own bosom—and like fire that needs air and vent, it will soon expire. Angry words often prove a fan to the spark—many people who in the beginning are but slightly displeased, talk themselves at length into a violent passion. Never speak until you are cool and under control—the man who can command his tongue will find no difficulty in governing his spirit. And when you do speak, let it be in meekness—"a soft answer turns away wrath." When you see others angry and hot, let it be an admonition to you to be cool—thus you will receive the furious indiscretions of others like a stone into a bed of moss, where it will lie quietly without rebounding.

Stop your anger in the beginning. It is easier to put out a spark than a conflagration. It would be well always to terminate the conversation, and leave the company of an individual, when anger is creeping in. "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when you perceive not in him the lips of knowledge."

Avoid disputations, which often engender strifes—and especially avoid them in reference to people of known irritability. Who would contend with a snake or a hornet?

Brood not over injuries. "Or else, you will be devils to yourselves, tempt yourselves when you have no others to tempt you, and make your solitude harmful to yourself." (Baxter's 'Directions'—from which

vast fund of practical theology, many of the particulars of this chapter are derived)

Beware of tale-bearers, and do not allow their reports to rouse your resentments.

Do not be inquisitive into the affairs of other men, nor the faults of your servants, nor the mistakes of your friends—lest you go out to gather sticks to kindle a fire, which shall burn your own house.

Look at others who are addicted to passion, and see how repulsive they appear.

Commission some faithful and affectionate friend to watch over and admonish you.

But especially mortify pride and cultivate HUMILITY. "Pride only breeds quarrels." "He who is of a proud heart, stirs up strife." Angry passion is the daughter of pride—meekness the offspring of humility. Humility is the best cure for anger, sullenness, and revenge. He who thinks much of himself, will think much of every little offense committed against him; while he who thinks little of his own importance will think lightly of what is done to offend him. Every irritable, passionate, or revengeful person, is certainly a proud one, and should begin the cure of his passion by the removal of his pride.

But we need go no farther than the chapter before us, for an antidote to anger. LOVE is sufficient of itself; we must seek to have more of this heavenly virtue. Love can neither be angry, passionate or revengeful. Love is full of benevolence and good-will, and therefore cannot allow itself to indulge those tempers which are unfriendly to the happiness of mankind. Let us seek to strengthen LOVE—this parent principle—which will prevent the growth of whatever is evil, and promote the advancement of all that is excellent.

One caution may here be suggested for the encouragement of those who are particularly tried with an irritable temper, and that is—not

to despond. If in the work of mortification you meet with many defeats, do not be in a passion with yourselves for being in a passion, for this will only increase the evil you are anxious to destroy. Go calmly, yet courageously, to the conflict—if victorious be not elated—if defeated be not disheartened. Often you will have to mourn your failures, and sometimes be ready to imagine that you are doomed to the hopeless task of Sisyphus, whose stone always rolled back again, when, by immense labor, he had urged it nearly to the summit of the hill. Do not expect an easy or a perfect conquest. Mourn your defeats—but do not despair. Many, after a few unsuccessful efforts, give up the cause, and abandon themselves to the tyranny of their angry passions. In this conflict, unsuccessful struggles are more honorable than unresisting submission.

3. Love will of course prevent REVENGE. Revenge is a term that a Christian should blot out from his vocabulary with his own penitential tears—or with the drops of his gratitude for the pardon he has received from God. There is no passion more hostile to the very essence of Christianity, or more frequently forbidden by its authority, than revenge. And there is no sinful passion to which the depravity of human nature more powerfully excites us. The volume of history is stained, from the beginning to the end, with the blood which has been shed by the 'demon of revenge'. Mankind, in every age and country, have groaned under the misery inflicted by this restless and cruel spirit, which no injury can satisfy, no suffering appease. Revenge has converted men into wild beasts—and inspired them with a wish to tear each other to pieces.

Such a temper as revenge would never meet with the least toleration or sanction in the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus, whose person was an incarnation of love—and whose Gospel is an emanation of love. Revenge is admitted by some as justifiable to a certain extent. By the reasoning and conduct of the world, the principle of revenge is allowed, yes, honored, and only condemned in its most vicious excess. Wars, duels, fightings, private animosities that do not infringe on the peace of society, are all justified on this ground.

Mankind alter the golden rule, and do unto others not as they desire that others should do to them—but as others do unto them, in a way of evil. And this, so far from being blamed, revenge is generally applauded as honorable and dignified. In the estimate of the people of the world, the man who refuses to resent an injury which he has received, is a poor weak-spirited creature, unworthy to associate with men of honor.

But whatever may be the maxims of the world—revenge is certainly forbidden by every page of the Word of God. "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense." Private revenge was certainly forbidden under the Old Testament, and still more explicitly under the New. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," said our Lord, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." "You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth—but I say unto you, Do not resist an evil person. You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy—but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you—that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

The same sentiments are enjoined by the apostles. "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath. If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." These passages are decisive upon the point, that revenge in any form, or in any measure—is forbidden by the Christian religion.

The misfortune of many is, that they mistake the meaning of the term revenge—or rather they confine its application to the grosser, more mischievous, and more violent expressions of wrath. They

think that nothing is revenge but cutting or maiming the person—openly slandering the reputation—or wantonly injuring the property. Such, it must be admitted, are fearful ebullitions of this destructive passion. But they are not the only ways in which revenge expresses itself. There are a thousand petty acts of spite and ill-will, by which a revengeful spirit may operate. If we refuse to speak to another by whom we have been injured, and pass him with silent or manifest scorn—if we take delight in talking of his failings, and in lowering him in the opinion of others—if we show ill-will to his children or relations on his account—if we watch for an opportunity to perform some little act of annoyance towards him, and feel gratified in the thought that we have given him trouble or pain—all this is done in a spirit of retaliation, and is as truly, though not so dreadfully, the actings of revenge, as if we proceeded to inflict bodily injury!

The spirit of revenge simply means returning evil for evil, and taking pleasure in doing so. It may go to the extremes of calumny and murder, or may confine itself to the infliction of minor wrongs; but if we in any way resent an injury with ill-will towards the person who committed it, this is revenge.

A question will here arise, whether according to this view we are not forbidden to defend our person, our property, and our reputation, from the aggressions of lawless mischief? Certainly not. If an assassin attempts to maim or to murder me, I am allowed to resist the attack—for this is not revenging an evil, but an effort to prevent one. If our character in society be slandered, we must endeavor, by peaceful means, to gain an apology and exoneration; and if this cannot be obtained, we are authorized to appeal to the law; for if calumny were not punished, society could not exist. If, however, instead of appealing to the law, we were to calumniate in return; if we were to inflict bodily injury on the aggressor, or take delight in injuring him in other ways—this would be revenge.

But to seek the protection of the law, without at the same time indulging in malice—this is self-defense and the defense of society. If

we are injured, or are likely to be injured in our property, we must try, by all private and honorable means, to prevent the aggression; be willing to settle the affair by the mediation of wise and impartial men, and keep our minds free from anger, ill-will and malice, towards the aggressors; and as a last resource, we are justifiable in submitting the cause, if it cannot be settled by any other means, to the decision of a court of justice. No Christian however should resort to the tribunal of public justice until every method of private adjustment has failed.

As it respects the propriety of Christians going to law with each other, the testimony of the apostle is decisive. "When you have something against another Christian, why do you file a lawsuit and ask a secular court to decide the matter, instead of taking it to other Christians to decide who is right? Don't you know that someday we Christians are going to judge the world? And since you are going to judge the world, can't you decide these little things among yourselves? Don't you realize that we Christians will judge angels? So you should surely be able to resolve ordinary disagreements here on earth. If you have legal disputes about such matters, why do you go to outside judges who are not respected by the church? I am saying this to shame you. Isn't there anyone in all the church who is wise enough to decide these arguments? But instead, one Christian sues another—right in front of unbelievers! To have such lawsuits at all is a real defeat for you. Why not just accept the injustice and leave it at that? Why not let yourselves be cheated?" 1 Cor. 6:1-7

Men professing godliness, especially members of the same religious community, ought, in cases of difference about property or character, to settle all their disputes by the mediation of their own brethren—and if either party declines such arbitration, he must be accountable for all the scandal thrown on the Christian profession by the legal measures to which the other may find it necessary to resort for the protection of his rights. In this case the guilt of infringing the apostolic regulation lies on him who refuses to accede to this Scriptural method of settling the differences that may arise among

those who profess to be the disciples of Christ. Whatever award is made, in the case of private arbitration, both parties should abide by it; nor must the individual against whom the decision is given, feel any ill-will, or cherish any revenge towards his successful competitor.

The law of love requires that innumerable minor offenses should be passed over without being noticed—or allowed to disturb our peace of mind. And those which we find it necessary to have explained, require the utmost caution and delicacy. In these cases, love will lead us to the offender, in the spirit of meekness, to ask, not to demand—to solicit in the most gentle manner—an explanation of the injurious treatment. In a great majority of cases, this line of conduct would stifle the animosity while it is yet a spark. If, on the contrary, we permit ourselves to take offense, and have our feelings wounded, or our anger roused; if, instead of mildly and affectionately expostulating, and seeking reconciliation, we brood over the injury, and retire in disgust, to indulge in sullenness, or to watch for an opportunity of revenge—this is being "easily provoked," and the very opposite of "suffering long."

The Kindness of God

"Love is kind."

It is a decisive proof and a striking display of the excellence of the Christian religion, that it enjoins not only the loftier and more rigid excellencies of the human character—but those also which are delicately amiable and tender; not only the masculine virtues—but the feminine graces; in short, that it not only prepares its possessor to be a patriot on the great theater of his country, or a spectacle of heroic martyrdom to God, to angels, and to men—but a sympathizing friend in the social and domestic circles. Love can either expand its benevolence to the claims of the whole human family—or

concentrate its emotions, for a time, in one individual object of pity or affection.

"Love is kind." KINDNESS means a disposition to please—a concern, manifested by our conduct, to promote the comfort of our race. Pity commiserates their sorrows; mercy relieves their needs and mitigates their woes; but kindness is a general attention to their comfort. It is thus described and distinguished by a celebrated writer on English synonyms—"The terms affectionate and fond, characterize feelings. Kind, is an epithet applied to outward actions, as well as inward feelings; a disposition is affectionate or fond; a behavior is kind. A person is affectionate, who has the object of his regard strongly in his mind, who participates in his pleasures and in his pains, and is pleased with his society. A person is kind, who expresses a tender sentiment, or does any service in a pleasant manner. Relatives should be affectionate to each other; we should be kind to all who stand in need of our kindness." Kindness, then, appears to be an affectionate behavior. This is what the apostle means when he admonishes us to "be kindly affectioned one to another."

Let us view the KIND MAN in contrast with some other characters.

A kind man is the opposite of the rigid, severe, and censorious person, who will make no allowance for the infirmities or inexperience of others; but judges harshly, reproves sternly, and speaks severely, of all who do not come up to his standard. Kindness, on the contrary—makes all reasonable allowances—frames the best excuses it can, consistently with truth and holiness—speaks of the offender in a way of mitigation, and to him in a way of compassion—does not publish nor exaggerate his faults—and endeavors to find out some redeeming qualities to set off against his failings.

A kind man is the opposite of a proud and overbearing one. The latter is ever seeking an opportunity to display his superiority, and make you feel your inferiority; and cares not how much your feelings are hurt by this offensive exhibition of his consequence. Kindness, if

conscious, as it sometimes must be, of its superiority, takes care that those who are below it shall not feel a painful sense of their inferiority. Without sacrificing its dignity, it will conceal as much as possible its pre-eminence, or unite it with such affability as shall render it by no means unpleasant.

Kindness is opposed to coldness and selfishness of disposition. There are people who, though neither cruel, nor injurious, nor really hard-hearted—are yet so cold, and distant, and retiring, and repulsive—that they can neither be approached nor moved. They look upon the scenes around them with the fixed and beamless eye, the chilliness and quiescence of the statue—for they have no interest in the concerns of the world. But kindness is the visible expression of a feeling and merciful heart; it is the goings-forth of a tender and susceptible mind; it claims kindred with the human race; it is all ear to listen—all heart to feel—all eye to examine and to weep—all hand and foot to relieve; it invites the sufferer with kind words, and does not send him away empty.

Kindness is opposed to a vain and ostentatious liberality. "When you give a gift to someone in need, don't shout about it as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I assure you, they have received all the reward they will ever get. But when you give to someone, don't tell your left hand what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in secret, and your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you." Matthew 6:2-4.

Some will be charitable if they may have spectators of their good deeds, who shall go and proclaim their charities. They spoil the action by their mode of performing it—for they will, in the most indelicate manner, make the object of their bounty feel a painful sense of obligation—they will state the exact amount, almost in monetary value, of the favors they have conferred; and then go away and give such publicity to their doings, that the beneficiary is almost everywhere sure to hear of what has been done for him.

Kindness will on the other hand conceal as much as possible that it is actually conferring a favor; will do everything to cause it to descend lightly upon the spirit of the recipient; and would, if circumstances allowed, gladly extend relief from behind a veil which hides the giver, and does everything to prevent the sense of obligation from being either painful or oppressive.

Kindness is opposed to the benevolence of partiality, prejudice, and caprice. There are not a few who are lavish in their fondness towards people of their own family, friends and party—or upon those who happen to be their favorites for the time. But for any outside their own circle of family and partisans, or of their select friends—they have none of the charities of life. Their benevolent regards are purely sectarian or absolutely capricious. But true kindness is a clear perennial spring, rising up from a heart replete with universal philanthropy, holding on its way, unimpeded by prejudices or partialities, and distributing its benefits alike upon all that it meets with in its course.

Having thus contrasted kindness with some characteristics to which it is opposed, let us now consider the manner in which it acts.

Kindness expresses itself in WORDS that are calculated to please. As not only our words, but the tones of our voice are indicative of our thoughts and feelings, it is of consequence for us to be careful, both as to what we say, and how we say it. Half of the quarrels which disturb the peace of society arise from unkind words, and not a few from unkind tones. We should sedulously avoid a sour, morose, chiding mode of speech, and adopt a soothing, conciliatory, and affectionate style of address. A surly tone is calculated to wound or offend; and love, which carries the law of kindness upon its lips, will consequently avoid it. A snappish, petulant, scolding address, is in the highest degree repulsive and dissonant in the communion of society. We may not have, it is true, the music of sound in our speech—but it is our own fault if we have not the music of love. We need not employ grimace, fawning flattery, hollow and unmeaning

compliment—but we may be courteous and affectionate; and we ought to "let our speech be seasoned with salt, that it may minister grace to the hearers." Every word and every modulation of the voice that is likely to offend, should be studiously avoided, and will be avoided by kindness—which extends also to ACTIONS. It is anxious not to give offense by anything which it does; it is most delicately tender in reference to the feelings of its object, and would not unnecessarily crush the wing of an insect, much less inflict a wound on a rational mind. There are people who, in a spirit of selfish independence, care not whom they please or whom they offend, But love is as anxious not to offend—as it is solicitous about its own gratification. Its neighbor's comfort is as dear to it as its own. It calculates, deliberates, weighs the tendency of actions, and when by incaution, or pure misfortune, it has occasioned distress, it hastens by every practicable means to heal the wound.

Kindness not only abstains from actual injury—but it is active in conferring benefits—watches for an opportunity to please—is ever ready to afford its assistance when appealed to—and is not satisfied unless it can do something to increase the general stock of comfort. Kindness accommodates itself to men's habits, partialities, or prejudices. Kindness adapts itself, in things indifferent and lawful, to their modes of acting, and does not wantonly oppose their desires, when such resistance would occasion them distress. A stiff uncomplying behavior, which consults nothing but its own desires, and which will not sacrifice the least punctilio of its own habits to give pleasure, has not a particle of beneficence about it. Such an individual is like a person in a crowd, who will walk with his arms stretched out, or with annoying weapons in his hand.

Kindness extends of course to little things, as well as to great ones. The happiness or misery of life does not consist so much in the 'transport of joy', or the 'anguish of affliction', as in feelings of an inferior kind—which, though less violent, are more frequent than those strong emotions. Hence it is in our power to make others miserable in life; not perhaps, by deeds of cruelty or injustice, which

we dare not or cannot commit—but by indulging in unaccommodating dispositions towards them—by vexing them with acts of unkindness, which will neither blast our reputation, nor put in peril our property, liberty, or life.

And it is also in our power to make them happy, not so much by signal and material services, which are seldom called for at our hands—as by the inferior offices of little benevolences. The daily and almost hourly reciprocity of little acts of good or ill will, which we have an opportunity of performing, go a great way to the making up of good or bad neighborship. There are those who, in the greater expressions of Christian mercy, are really humane; whose benevolence at the same time has not learned to stoop to little things. They are compassionate—but they lack kindness. They would relieve a starving beggar—but they would not put themselves in ever so small a degree out of their way to accommodate in trivial matters a near neighbor.

Kindness is universal in its objects. We have known individuals who could never do enough for some objects of their regard—but they are by no means people of diffusive kindness. And perhaps, if we examine, we shall find that their benevolence has a great mixture of selfishness in it—for it is exercised only towards those from whom they expect an ample return. It is the kindness of barter—not of love. It is so much of their giving put out at interest—not given away to the needy. They either have had, or expect to have, value received for all they do. But love is universal in its aspect; it is ever ready to do a kind office for anyone that either solicits or needs its assistance. Its language is, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters." It has a kind look, word, and act—for everybody. Nor are its enemies denied the assistance of its efforts.

Such is the generous spirit of the Christian religion, as appears from the passages quoted in a preceding chapter. Such is the refined, the sublime morality of the New Testament. Yes, these are the principles on which kindness acts—it extends its beneficence to the very man

that has treated it with ridicule and scorn—with cruelty, insult, and oppression. This is its duty and its inclination. In imitation of the dying Savior, who gave his last prayer to his murderers, it says, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" We have known many, who will endure any hardship, make any exertion, bear any sacrifice for their family and friends, for whom they can never do enough. But toward their enemies, they are unkind, implacable, and resentful. The man who has injured them, they can never forgive; for him they have no kindness—but hold him in contempt, aversion, and neglect. But Christianity requires a higher and more unselfish virtue than this—for it commands us to be kind to our enemies.

What a fascinating character is the man of distinguished kindness! He is invested with indescribable loveliness—he may not have the glory in which the patriot, the hero, or the martyr is enshrined; but he is adorned in no common degree with the beauties of holiness. He carries about with him the majesty of goodness, if not the dominion of greatness. The light of his countenance is the warm sunshine, to which the grief-stricken turn from their dark retreats, to bask in its glow. And his gentle words are like soft melody to chase away the evil thoughts from the bosom of melancholy, and to hush to peace the troubled reflections of the distempered mind. As he moves along his career, distributing the inexpensive but efficient expressions of his regards, it is amid the blessing of those that were ready to perish, and the notes of the widow's heart, which he has turned to joy. When he comes unexpectedly into the company of his friends, every countenance puts on the appearance of delight, and it appears as if a beneficent person had come among them to bless the party; as he looks round on the circle, with the smile of kindness that has found an abiding place upon his brow, he presents the brightest resemblance to be found in our selfish world, of the entrance of the Savior among his disciples when he said, "Peace be unto you!" and breathed upon them the Holy Spirit.

Although he neither seeks nor wishes an equivalent in return for his many acts of benevolence, his gentle spirit receives back, in a full

tide, the streams of consolation which had ebbed from his own heart to fill the empty channels of his neighbor's happiness. Who can be unkind to him—who is kind to all? What heart is so hard, what mind is so cruel, what spirit is so diabolical—as to wound him, who never appears among his race, but as a ministering angel? There is a magic in his tears to melt to sympathy the stubborn soul of cruelty itself, which has a tear for no one else. There is no less a magic in his smiles, so far to relax and soften the hard features of envy, as to reflect for a moment the sunshine of his joy. While he lives, every man is his admirer—and when he dies, every man is his mourner. While he is on earth, his name has a home in every heart—and when he is gone, he has a monument in every memory—and this is the description of his character—the record of his praise—love is kind!

The Contentment of Love

"Love does not envy."

ENVY is that passion which causes us to feel uneasiness at the sight of another's possessions or happiness—and which makes us dislike him on that account. Of all the base passions, this is the basest. It is unmingled malignity, the very worst and bitterest dregs of human depravity—the most direct contrariety of love. Envy is either general or special in its objects. 'General' envy often exists in the mind to such an extent that its subjects seem almost instinctively opposed to excellence and to happiness, wherever they see them, or wherever they hear them. They may not regard the individuals on whom their envious glance is fixed in the light of competitors or rivals; they may have nothing to hope from their recession—nothing to fear from their elevation; but it is enough to awaken their uneasiness and dislike to know that they are in some respects superior. They cannot bear to see excellence or happiness in anyone, or even to hear the language of commendation or praise. They would beggar the

universe to enrich themselves, and monopolize all possessions and all admiration; they would be alone in the world, as the sole occupants of everything valuable, and can endure neither a superior nor an equal. This, it must be allowed, is a height to which envy rarely attains, compared with its more special and limited operations.

It will be proper, before we delineate at length the evil features and general deformity of this hideous passion, to state the more prevailing grounds and occasions of its exercise. And it is a striking proof of its evil nature, that it is rarely indulged in reference to holiness or virtue. It scarcely ever happens that any one is envied for superior moral excellence, as such—many are hated for their virtue; but envy, while it includes hatred, combines with it a desire to possess the thing which occasions the uneasiness. It may indeed indirectly covet the virtue of another—but this is only on account of the esteem, the influence, or the delight which it procures, and not on account of the virtue itself; hence Satan, after his fall, is represented by our great poet as envying our first parents, not on the ground of their perfect rectitude—but of their happiness, and of their inheriting his lost honors. This horrid disposition of envy—is too satanic, too infernal, too far removed from all moral rectitude, to perceive the beauties of holiness, or to covet them on their own account.

The ultimate object and real ground of envy appears to me to be either happiness or public admiration—and all other things are regarded but as accessory to these. Let any one be more happy or more generally noticed and esteemed by others—and he will be sure to be regarded with envy. And what are those things which in general estimation procure for their possessors either pleasure or applause, and are therefore the occasions of envy?

1. ACCOMPLISHMENTS—such as genius, learning, eloquence, science, courage, skill—or any of those arts that attract the notice of the world.

2. Physical BEAUTY. How frequently has beauty of form or features—a gift which in value should be rated lower than any other which the hand of the Creator has bestowed upon us—been beheld with spiteful eyes, and by some less adorned competitors for admiration—been converted into an occasion of hatred and uneasiness.

3. Superiority in RANK and FORTUNE is a very common occasion for this detestable vice. Hence the ill-will which the poor often bear towards the rich, as engrossing to themselves all the comforts of life. Hence the evil eye with which people of inferior station scrutinize those who are above them in rank.

4. Superior SUCCESS in the pursuit of worldly objects of any kind is sure to excite the uneasiness and dislike of less fortunate rivals. Let a scientist be more successful in the career of scientific discovery—or a scholar in the path of literature—or a warrior in the field of glory—or a tradesman in the accumulation of wealth—or a mechanic in the toils of industry—and there will not be lacking those who will covet their rewards—and dislike them for their happier fortunes.

But while these are the general grounds of envy, there are some special objects to which it is commonly directed, such for instance as the following.

People who are nearly on our own level. Individuals who are either much above us in station, or much below us—are not so likely to excite uneasiness or dislike as those who are of our own standing in society. The tradesman envies not the nobleman—but some fellow-tradesman; the laurels and fame of the hero are not envied by the common soldier—but by some officer of his own rank.

Those who, though much above us, occupy a station from which we have been cast down, are likely to be regarded by us with an evil eye, and to draw forth our dislike.

Those who have obtained an honor, place, or esteem for which we once contended, are almost sure to be envied by us; and also any

particular single rival, who more than all others eclipses us, or is likely to do so.

It may not be amiss to specify here, those who are most in danger of committing the sin of envy—

1. The sorrowful. "Sorrow is selfish—it concentrates the affections upon our own interests. It may teach us to sympathize with griefs of others—but that others do grieve is something like consolation to the sorrowful; and those who would sympathize with others in their sorrows, and weep with those that weep, fall short of the higher attainment, to rejoice with those that rejoice. Sorrow cannot sympathize with happiness—and therefore heaven cannot admit sorrow—for envy would then enter with it. Happiness will not only be the fruit of holiness in another world—but the perfection of it, since it is that native seat in which alone the soul attains the full development of its affections so as to take part, without a jarring fiber, in the universal harmony." Let the sorrowful—be the occasion of their sorrows what it might—be much upon their guard, for they are pre-eminently in danger of envying those to whom Providence has granted a happier lot than to themselves.

2. People descending in life, and suffering under those painful reverses which have reduced them from comparative affluence and publicity, to obscurity and poverty, are exposed to the temptation of looking with ill-will and distress upon the prosperous and happy. Misfortune, where it is not sanctified by the grace of God, is very apt to produce an jealous disposition, and to generate envy in the bosom of its wretched subjects. Hard indeed is it, as WE sink into the shadow, to see the elevation of more favored individuals who rise into sunshine. An envious person will have feelings of jealousy and dislike for those who are succeeding.

3. Candidates for fame and popular applause are oftener than all others—the subjects of this base passion of envy! Could the veil that hides the heart be drawn aside, how much of this operation of

human depravity would be detected! How much of hatred, envy, malice, and all uncharitableness, is sometimes to be found in the writer. Envy is also the orator's besetting sin. "Vanity, or a thirst after applause, is the most unsocial and envious of the passions—avarice itself not excepted. The reason is plain. Property is a kind of good, which may be more easily attained, and is capable of more minute subdivision, than fame. The portion of time and attention mankind are willing to spare from their avocations and pleasures, to devote to the 'admiration of each other', is so small, that every successful candidate is felt to have impaired the common stock. The success of one is the disappointment of multitudes. For though there be many rich, many virtuous, many wise men—fame must necessarily be the portion of but few. Hence every vain man, regarding his competitor as his rival, is strongly tempted to rejoice in his misfortune, and to repine at his success."

4. The prosperous, those who have gained much, or nearly all they seek, are apt to feel peculiar ill-will to any who may be just above them—and stand between them and the summit of their desires. That one man who keeps us from the highest rank, the chief place, is more likely to be hated, than all others who have actually injured us! How insatiable is envy—that evil desire—how craving after more, amid all its stores. Human nature is never satisfied with earthly good. I believe that many are inconceivably more miserable, and more full of hatred, who have vast possessions—than others who have scarcely anything.

On the other hand, there is not any kind of superiority, however low its nature or obscure its situation, which is not found to be sufficient to call forth the ill-will and hatred of some inferior or disappointed spectator. Children and farmers, as well as philosophers, warriors and princes, are subject to its influence. Like the venomous spider, envy weaves its web, and directs its deadly glance, in the cottages of poverty, the mansions of affluence, and the halls of science. Envy is the epidemic of the human race, the most common operation of human depravity. The apostle seems to give it as a general

description of human nature, while unrenewed by divine grace—"Living in malice and envy—hateful, and hating one another." The whole Gentile world, before the coming of Christ, is described as having been "full of envy." "Envyings," bear a high place among the works of the flesh; and on the churches of believers, there was no one evil of which the prohibition was more frequent or more earnestly enjoined than this—and the apostle James tells us, that it is still partially inherent in every man—"the spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy."

This execrable disposition very often exists, where, through the deceitfulness of the human heart, it is not at all suspected! Sometimes it is felt in reference to an individual whom we have been accustomed to consider an inferior, and worthy only of our ridicule and contempt. But that very contempt and ridicule is often an operation of envy—our eye has discovered, almost without our being conscious of the fact, some fancied or real superiority, and in order to dispute it, or to conceal it, we have determined to treat him as only worthy of our ridicule and scorn. Our laughter is intended to hide the passion which lurks in our bosom, and to disparage or destroy in our own and others' estimation, the excellence or happiness which produces it. Envy, like the Devil, its parent, has a laugh as well as a frown at its command!

Envy is often found in people who are in general accounted very amiable, and really are so, in most things. People the very opposite of such characters as Cain, and Saul, and Ahab—people who have not only much suavity of discourse—but much kindness of disposition—are not free from the workings of this disposition in secret, and are sometimes guilty of such exhibitions of it, as fall like a dark shadow upon their many and distinguished virtues. Yes, it is, we lament to say, to borrow the true and just sarcasm of a writer already quoted, "a most reputable and orthodox vice, a regular church-going sin, one which often dresses like virtue and talks like her. Envy has a great zeal for religion, a keen sense of public justice, and is much shocked at the inconsistencies of good people. It exults when a hypocrite is

unmasked, and says, 'I always suspected him!' It is also most benevolent, and when adversity overtakes a brother, prays that it may be the means of promoting his humility and other Christian graces."

Ah! how much envy there indeed is—even in the church of God. How much of that censoriousness and detraction which is indulged under pretense of bewailing the follies of others, is to be traced up to this evil source! How often is a 'little infirmity' pitched upon and deplored, with no other motive than to discredit and disparage that sterling excellence with which it happens to be associated—the 'speck' is pointed at and magnified, perhaps with a look of sorrow, and a tone of lamentation—but only to draw off public attention from the luster which is admired and envied! Envy has a thousand devices to practice against its object—under the veil of deceptive respect!

Is there any sin to which even the ministers of the gospel are more exposed than this? Is there any sin which they more frequently commit? How much grace does it require in any man to see the popularity, and hear of the usefulness of others—and to find himself overlooked and forgotten—without being envious! Perhaps the applauded individuals are his juniors in age, and his inferiors in literature, and taste, and science—and yet while he lies unnoticed—they are swept along their course with full gales of popular applause. How few, even of those whose business it is to preach contentment, and humility, and love, can with sincerity say, "I am quite satisfied that the honor should be denied to me—and rest upon the brows of others. I am prepared to say without a murmur, he must increase—but I must decrease."

This is indeed the virtue of heaven—to see others occupying a higher sphere than ourselves, more caressed, more admired, and more followed—and feel neither uneasiness in our own bosom nor anything of ill-will toward them. It is virtue rarely found on earth. For on the contrary, what distress and dislike are produced on some minds, by the talents and the success of those of fellow ministers,

who are but a little more esteemed than themselves! Are there no arts of detraction employed, to diminish, if not their popularity, yet their claims to the coveted palm? No insinuations against their motives? No searching for vices of style, errors of taste, defects of learning? O when shall envy—that child of hell—be driven from the church of God? When shall it no longer creep in the pew—or soar in the pulpit?

Baxter has some very striking remarks on this subject. "O that ever it should be spoken of godly ministers, that they are so set upon popular applause, and of sitting high in men's estimation, that they envy the abilities and notoriety of their brethren who are preferred before them—as if all were taken from their praises that are given to another's; and as if God had given them their gifts to be the mere ornaments and trappings of their people, that they may walk as men of reputation in the world, and all his gifts in others were trodden down and vilified, if they seem to stand in the way of their honor! What, a preacher for Christ—and yet envy that which has the image of Christ—and malign his gifts for which he should have the glory—and all because they seem to hinder our glory? Is not every true Christian a member of the body, and therefore partakes the blessings of the whole, and of each particular member thereof? And does not every man owe thanks to God for his brethren's gifts—not only as having himself a part in them, as the foot has the benefit of the guidance of the eye—but also because his own ends may be obtained by his brethren's gifts as well as by his own? For if the glory of God and the church's felicity be not his end, he is not a Christian. Will any workman malign another because he helps him to do his master's work? Yet, alas, how common is this heinous crime of envy, amid men of ability and eminency in the church! They can secretly blot the reputation of those of greater eminence than themselves. And what they cannot for shame do in plain and open terms, lest they be proved palpable liars and slanderers—they will do in malicious innuendos—raising suspicions where they cannot fasten accusations. And so far are some gone in this satanical vice, that it is their common practice, and a considerable part of their business, to keep

down the estimation of those they dislike, and defame others in the slyest and most plausible way! And some go so far that they are unwilling that any that are abler than themselves should come into their pulpits, lest they should be applauded above themselves! A fearful thing, that any man who has the least of the fear of God, should so envy at God's gifts, and had rather that his carnal hearers remain unconverted, and the drowsy not awakened—than that it should be done by another, who may be preferred before them! Yes, so far does this cursed vice prevail, that in great congregations—which have need of the help of many teachers, we can scarcely get two pastors in equality, to live together in love and quietness, and unanimously to carry on the work of God! But unless one of them be quite below the other in abilities, and content to be less esteemed, and ruled by the other—they are contending for superior honor—and envying each other—and walking with unkindness and jealousy towards each other—to the shame of the profession—and the great wrong of the congregation! I am ashamed to think of it, that when I have been endeavoring with ministers to further a good work, to convince them of the necessity of more ministers than one in great congregations, they tell me they will never agree together. I hope the objection is ungrounded as to the most ministers—but it is a sad case that so many ministers envy one another! No, some men are so far gone in pride, that when they might have an assistant of equal abilities, to further the work of God—they had rather take all the burden upon themselves—though more than they can bear—than that any should share with them in the honor—and for fear lest they should diminish their esteem with the people!

"I confess I have often wondered that this most heinous sin of envy, should be made so light of, and thought so consistent with a holy frame of heart and life—when far lesser sins are by ourselves proclaimed to be so damnable in our people.

"Brethren, I know this is a sad and harsh confession! But that all this should be so among us ministers, is more grievous, and should be so to us, than to be told of it. Could this nakedness be hid, I would not

have disclosed it, at least so openly in the view of all. But, alas, this 'ministerial envy' is long ago open to the eye of the world—we have dishonored ourselves by idolizing our own honor—we print our shame, and preach our shame, and tell it unto all." (Richard Baxter, "The Reformed Pastor". This is a treatise, which, if frequently and devoutly read by all ministers of true religion, as it should be, would be a signal blessing to us!)

And are not religious bodies sometimes guilty of this sin? Has it no existence in the bosoms of professing Christians of different denominations? Is there no envy in Dissenters towards the Church of England—or of the Church of England towards Dissenters? Of Baptists towards Paedobaptists—or Paedobaptists towards Baptists? Of Methodists towards Congregationalists—and Congregationalists towards Methodists? Why that disposition to suspect and traduce each other—which is but too common among all the divisions of the Christian church? If one denomination prospers, are not all the rest too apt to look on with envious eyes, because theirs is likely to be eclipsed or diminished? Are not all the little arts of detraction most busily employed, and a hundred tongues made voluble to arrest the progress, and limit the prosperity, of the rising sect?

And how much of this envious spirit is often seen in the conduct of rising congregations of the same denominations! What ill-will is often cherished by the members of the declining cause, towards those of the prosperous one—and only because they are prosperous! They can never hear of the success of their sister church, without feeling and appearing uneasy and displeased—as if an injury were done to them; they profess to be skeptical of the fact; they suggest that it is more in outward show, than reality; they do not scruple to mention draw-backs in the talents, or perhaps the inconsistencies, of that minister; detraction, yes, even slander is employed against some of the members of this prosperous church, as it is sneeringly called. Such, even in Christian churches, or rather in the minds of some of their members, are the operations of envy.

Nor is its influence excluded from Religious Institutions. There is no sanctuary so sacred, which this diabolical passion of envy, will not violate—no asylum consecrated to piety or humanity, into which it will not intrude. Bible Societies, Missionary Societies, with other kindred institutions, are not secure against the entrance, operation and mischief of envy! Yes the more elevated and the more holy the ground—the more ambitious is envy to occupy it! Born in heaven, though soon cast down to hell, to heaven it would ascend again if it could. Envy is a vice, which while it spurns not the lowest place on earth, nor scorns the lowest bosom among men—is ambitious to approach as nearly as possible to the celestial temple—the doors of which it would force open if it could—and agitate and poison the mind of the second seraph in glory with ill-will towards the first, and make him hate the eternal God, because he, his creature, could not be higher than the Highest!

Let one man—or let one body of men—be conspicuous for their deeds of love and zeal in the cause of the Lord—let their doings go forth to the ends of the world, and their praises be sounded through the church of the living God—and Satan, alarmed at their past success and at their prospective victories, will soon find some bosoms which he will occupy with his own craft and his own envy—and from which he will go forth with all deceivableness, to maintain a factious and noisy opposition! And oh, how many cases we have been told, was to do the will, and seek the glory, and to accomplish the purposes of the Lord—were in fact nothing but the operation of that envy—which to the malignity, adds the subtlety of the old serpent!

Envy, with all its will and its power to do mischief, is not only a deceitful—but a dastardly vice! There is no being in our world so lofty that it will not attack! There is no place so strongly fortified that it will not assail! There is no enterprise so holy that it will not sneak in! There is it is at the same time ashamed and afraid to be seen as it really is. Pride, and revenge, and drunkenness, and gluttony, and many other vices—avow with an audacious boldness their names, and places of abode, and purposes—they borrow no mask—they put

on no cloak of disguise—much less do they clothe themselves in the robe of righteousness, and talk the language of a saint. But envy does all this, conscious that it is an unnatural disposition, unsuitable to the human constitution, and partaking more of the rancour of a devil than of the temper of a man; that it is universally odious, branded by the common consent of mankind with a stigma deep and foul—it disclaims its name, conceals its nature, makes its professor deny its abode in his bosom, and compels him to call it "a sense of equity," "a power of discrimination," "a concern for the public welfare," "an enemy to ostentation," and to such length do its falsehood and impiety go, it professes in some cases to be "a zeal for the glory of God!"

But let us now contemplate the HATEFUL NATURE of envy.

Envy is a vice of the utmost deformity and heinousness. To feel uneasiness at another's happiness or excellence, and to dislike him on that account, is a sin that needs—no analysis to prove its deadly nature—no dissection to expose its corruption; it presents at once, to the most superficial observer, a frightful and disgusting appearance—a kind of leprous surface. It stands directly opposed to the nature of God, whose love delights in excellence and in happiness, and whose grace produces both; and by whom this sin must be regarded with infinite loathing and abhorrence.

Envy is a secret murmuring against the appointments of heaven—an incessant quarrel with Providence—an accusation against the wisdom, equity, and goodness of the divine administration. As it is unlike God—so it is the image of Satan—being the disposition, united with the pride, which cast down the apostate angels from their seats in heaven, and which fills and fires their bosoms in the bottomless pit! Envy is a mirror of the state of hell, and unceasingly the passions of devils, who despair for themselves, and envy the happiness of men and angels, yet cannot rejoice either in the good or the evil they witness, although they endeavor to hinder the good, and promote the

evil, with all the restlessness of malice, and the devices of their mighty cunning.

Envy is a 'parent crime', and its progeny are as mischievous and deformed as itself—for malice, hatred, falsehood, slander, are its base brood; and not infrequently murder—for when carried to excess, there is scarcely an injury within its reach which it would not inflict upon its object!

Envy cannot even offer the excuses for itself which many vices sometimes bring forward. Anger pleads the provocation it has received—but envy has received no offense, except the well-being of another be an insult. Lust and intemperance plead the gratification which their objects yield, and robbery holds up its gain—but envy gains nothing but misery, and converts the happiness of which it is the witness into wormwood and gall of its own cup, and transvenoms the honey of another man's comfort into the poison of asps for its own bosom! Envy is—a source of eternal vexation—an instrument of self torment—a rottenness in the bones—a burning ulceration of the soul—a crime, which partaking of the guilt, partakes as largely of the misery of hell. (Jeremy Taylor)

Such is envy! But who can describe it accurately, or do it justice? If we look for it as embodied in living characters, we shall find it in Cain, the proto-murderer, who slew his brother at the instigation of this vice of envy. We shall find it in the dark and gloomy and revengeful spirit of Saul, who, under the influence of envy, plotted for years the slaughter of David. We shall find it in the King Ahab, when he pined for the vineyard of Naboth, and shed his blood to gain it. Yes, it was envy that perpetrated that most atrocious crime ever planned in hell, or executed on earth, on which the sun refused to look, and at which nature gave signs of abhorrence by the rending of the rocks; I mean the crucifixion of Christ—for the evangelist tells us, that for envy the Jews delivered our Lord. (Matthew 27:18, Mark 15:10)

How hateful, then, is this crime; and although we may not be in danger of carrying it to excess, yet we should ever strive against its least and lowest degrees. The means of opposing and mortifying it are many.

Let us very seriously meditate on its evil nature. A steady contemplation of its deformity and demon-like countenance is calculated to excite disgust, and to produce abhorrence. Many evils, and this among the number, are too much indulged, because they are too little contemplated. The more we meditate upon the heinousness of envy, the more we shall be convinced of the utter unsuitableness of such a temper as this is to be the inhabitant of a Christian's bosom—it is like a fiend inhabiting the temple of the Lord.

We must next form a deliberate resolution for its mortification—we must stand prepared to take the greatest pains, to maintain the most determined efforts, for the riddance of our hearts from so hateful a disposition.

Let us next consider, that the circumstances which excite our envy are among the arrangements of a wise Providence; and that to dislike another on account of his excellence or happiness, is a crime of no less magnitude than a wish to oppose and subvert the dispensations of heaven. Let us remember, that if others have more than ourselves—we have infinitely more than we deserve. A deliberate and frequent consideration of our numerous and aggravated sins, with our deliverance from their consequences, together with a survey of our mercies and hopes as Christians, would very powerfully help us in the great business of mortifying envy. For the chief difference between man and man, as to real happiness, lies in spiritual distinctions; and if we have these, the absence of anything else is matter of little consequence.

It may not be amiss also to consider how comparatively small is the amount of happiness derived by the object of our envy, from those possessions on the ground of which we dislike him—and how soon,

could we transfer them to ourselves, they would cease to impart any strong gratification to us. We always act under a delusion, when we indulge this hateful passion—its objects are seen through a magnifying medium of very high power. The circumstances which excite our envy have their attendant evils—evils which, though concealed from general observation, are well known to the possessor of them.

We should labor to be content with such things as we have—contentment is the secret of happiness, whether we have much or little. The man who makes up his mind to enjoy what he has, is quite as happy as he who is possessed of twice as much.

But still the great thing is, to endeavor by God's gracious help, to increase in LOVE. Our envy will then as certainly diminish, as darkness retires before the entrance of light, or cold before the power of heat. Love and envy are the very opposites of each other. Love delights in the happiness of others. Envy is made miserable by the happiness of others. Let us endeavor to cultivate this disposition of love, and to delight in witnessing and diffusing blessedness. This is what the Apostle meant, when he said, "Rejoice with those who rejoice." What a beatifying, and even sublime temper is that which leads its possessor to find consolation—even amid his own straits, privations, and difficulties—in contemplating the possessions and the comforts of those around him! What relief would such elevated virtue bring to the mourner, when he could turn his own darkened orb toward the illumination of his neighbor's prosperity!

Happy is the man who can thus borrow the joys of others, when he has none, or few of his own; and, from the wilderness of his own situation, enjoy the beautiful scene of his friend's well decorated yard and home. Difficult and rare as such a temper is, it is that which is the subject of the apostle's description in the chapter we are considering, and which it is the duty of every Christian to cultivate. Hard, indeed, is the saying, and few there are who can bear it—but it is assuredly the lesson which Christ teaches his disciples, and which

those disciples must all endeavor to learn. Much may be done by effort. Let us determine, by God's help, to acquire it, let us make the attempt, and let us only persevere, notwithstanding many defeats and many discouragements—and it is astonishing what may be done. But this kind goes not forth but by fasting and prayer.

Love cannot be cultivated, nor envy destroyed in our hearts—but by the power of the Holy Spirit. We may as well try to pull up by the roots the oak of a century's growth, or overturn a mountain by our own strength, as to eradicate the vice of envy from our hearts, without the aid of God's own Spirit—that aid is promised to fervent and persevering prayer—and if we have it not, the fault is our own.

The Humility of Love

"Love does not boast—it is not proud." 1 Cor. 13:4

The Apostle's meaning, in this part of his description, evidently is, that love has not a high and overweening conceit of its own possessions and acquirements, and does not ostentatiously boast of what it is, has done, can do, or intends to do. Love is opposed to pride and vanity, and is connected with true humility.

Pride signifies such an exalted idea of ourselves, as leads to self-esteem, and to contempt of others. It is self-admiration—self-doating. It differs from vanity thus—pride causes us to value ourselves; vanity makes us anxious for applause. Pride renders a man odious; vanity makes him ridiculous. Love is equally opposed to both.

Pride is the sin which laid the moral universe in ruins. It was pride which impelled Satan and his confederates to a mad "defiance of the Omnipotent to arms," for which they were driven from heaven, and taught by their bitter experience, that "God resists the proud." Banished from the world of celestials, pride alighted on our globe, in its way to hell, and brought destruction in its train. Propagated from our common and fallen parent with our race, pride is the original sin, the inherent corruption of our nature. It spreads over humanity with the contagious violence—the loathsome appearance of a moral leprosy, raging alike through the palace and the cottage, and infecting equally the prince and the peasant.

The GROUNDS of pride are various—whatever constitutes a distinction between man and man, is the occasion of this hateful disposition. It is a vice that does not dwell exclusively in kings' houses, wear only soft clothing, and feed every day upon titles, fame, or affluence—it accommodates itself to our circumstances, and

adapts itself to our distinctions, of whatever kind they be. The usual grounds of pride are the following—

WEALTH. Some value themselves on account of their fortune, look down with contempt on those below them—and exact fawning attentiveness towards themselves, and deference for their opinions—according to the thousands of money, or of acres, which they possess.

Others are proud of their **TALENTS**, either natural or acquired. The brilliancy of their genius, the extent of their learning, the splendor of their imagination, the acuteness of their understanding, their power to argue or speak publicly—form the object of self-esteem, and the reasons of that disdain which they pour upon all who are inferior to them in mental endowments. But these things are not so common in the church of God as those which we shall now mention.

RELIGIOUS CONNECTIONS form, in many cases, the occasion of pride. This was exemplified in the Jews, who boasted that they were the children of Abraham, and worshiped in the temple of the Lord. Their self-admiration, as the members of the only true church, and as the covenant people of God, was insufferably disgusting. In this feature of their character, they are too often imitated in modern times. While some boast of belonging to the church as by law established, and look with contempt on all who range themselves on the side of dissent—too many of the latter throw back the scorn upon their opponents, and pride themselves on the greater purity of their ecclesiastical order. There is the pride both of the dominant party, and also that of the seceding one—the pride of belonging to the church, which includes the court, the senate, the universities—and that which is sometimes felt in opposing this array of royalty, and learning, and law. There is the pride of thinking with the king, and the nobles, and the judges, and the prelates—and also that of thinking against them. Whatever leads us to think highly of ourselves in matters of religion, and to despise others, whether it be the distinctions of earthly greatness, the practice of religious duties, or

the independence of our mode of thinking—is opposed to the spirit of Christian love.

Superior LIGHT on the subject of revealed truth is no unusual occasion of pride. The Arminian pharisee dwells with fondness on the goodness of his heart; the Antinomian, with equal haughtiness, values himself on the clearness of his head; and the Socinian, as far from humility as either of them, is inflated with a conceit of the strength of his reason, and its elevation above vulgar prejudices—while not a few moderate Calvinists regard with complacency their sagacity in discovering the happy medium. As men are more proud of their understanding than of their disposition, it is very probable that religious opinions are more frequently the cause of conceit and self-importance, than anything else which could be mentioned. "It is knowledge," says the apostle, "that puffs up." "We are the men and wisdom will die with us"—is the temper of multitudes.

Religious GIFTEDNESS is sometimes the ground of self-admiration. Fluency and fervor in public prayer, ability to converse on doctrinal subjects, especially if accompanied by a ready utterance in public, have all through the influence of Satan and the depravity of our nature, led to the vile pride which we are now condemning. None are in more danger of this than the ministers of religion—it is the besetting sin of their office. There is no one gift which offers so strong a temptation both to vanity and to pride—as that of public speaking. If the orator really excels, and is successful, he is the immediate spectator of his success, and has not even to wait until he has finished his discourse; for although the decorum of public worship will not allow of audible tokens of applause, it does of visible ones—the look of interest, the tear of penitence or of sympathy, the smile of joy, the deep impression on the mind, the death-like stillness, cannot be concealed—all seem like a tribute of admiration to the presiding spirit of the scene; and then the compliments which are conveyed to his ear, after all the silent plaudits which have reached his eye—are equally calculated to puff him up with pride. No

men are more in danger of this sin than the ministers of the Gospel; none should watch more sleeplessly against it.

Deep religious EXPERIENCE has often been followed by the same effect, in those cases where it has been remarkably enjoyed. The methods of divine grace, though marked by a uniformity sufficient to preserve that likeness of character which is essential to the unity of the spirit and the sympathies of the church, are still distinguished by a vast variety of minor peculiarities. The convictions of sin in some minds are deeper—the apprehensions of divine wrath are more appalling—the transition from the poignant compunction of repentance, bordering on despair, to joy and peace in believing, more slow and more awful—the subsequent repose more settled—and the joy more unmingled with the gloom of distressing fears, than is experienced by the generality of their brethren. Such people are looked up to as professors of true religion, whose religious history has been remarkable, as vessels of mercy on which the hand of the Lord has bestowed peculiar pains, and which are eminently fitted for the master's use. They are regarded as having a peculiar sanctity about them, and hence they are in danger of falling under the temptation to which they are exposed, and of being proud of their experience. They look down from what they suppose to be their lofty elevation, if not with disdain, yet with suspicion, or with pity—upon those whose way has not been in their track. Their seasons of elevated communion with God, of holy enlargement of soul, are sometimes followed with this tendency. Paul was never more in danger of losing his humility, than when he was just returned from gazing upon the celestial throne.

ZEAL, whether it be felt in the cause of humanity or of piety has frequently produced pride. This was strikingly illustrated in the case of the Pharisee—"God, I thank you," said the inflated devotee, "that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax-collector—I fast twice in the week—I give tithes of all that I possess!" Where a natural liberality of mind, or religious principle—has led men to lavish their property, or their affluence, or their time

—upon benevolent institutions, they have too often returned from the scene of public activity, to indulge in private and personal admiration. They have read with peculiar delight the reports in which their munificence is recorded—and have assigned to themselves a high place in the roll of public benefactors.

On all these grounds does pride exalt itself—but love is no less opposed to VANITY than it is to pride—Love does not boast of, or ostentatiously display, its possessions, abilities, or good deeds. A disposition to boast, and to attract attention--is a common foible. We see this among the people of the world, in reference to their property, their learning, their good deeds, their influence. They are afraid the public should under-rate them, or pay a poor compliment to their importance—they thus think it necessary to proclaim it themselves, in order to make it known. If, indeed, they are what they wish to make us believe they are, the fact would be obvious, without this method of publishing it in every company. Boasting is always suspicious, or superfluous; for real greatness no more needs a publisher, than the sun!

But it is more particularly in reference to religious matters that this observation of the apostle applies. We should not appear eager to display our gifts—nor should we vaunt of our religious experience. The manner in which some good but weak people talk of their pious conflicts, is indeed intolerably offensive. No matter who is present, pious or profane, scorner or believer—they parade all their seasons of despondency or of rapture; they tell you how they struggled with the great enemy of souls, and overcame him; how they wrestled with God, and had power to prevail—and that you may have as exalted an opinion of their humility, as of their enjoyment, they tell you, in the utter violation of all propriety, and almost of decency, what temptations they have encountered—what hairbreadth escapes they have had from the commission of sin. Their motive is obvious—all this vaunting is to impress you with the idea, that they are exemplary Christians. Who can wonder that all religious conversation should have been branded with the epithets of 'whining cant' and 'disgusting

hypocrisy'—when the injudicious and nauseating effusions of such talkers are regarded as a fair sample of it?

Too common is it to make the externals of religion the subject of vain-glorious boasting. How long can you be in the company of some Christians without hearing of their splendid place of worship, and its vast superiority over all the rest of the town. They establish the most insulting and degrading comparisons between their minister and his brethren in the neighborhood—none are so eloquent, none are so able, none are so successful—as their minister! Notwithstanding your attachment to the pastor under whose ministry you sit with pleasure and profit—to boast about him is dishonoring and degrading vanity!

And what a propensity is there in the present age, to display, and parade, and boasting—in reference to religious zeal! This is one of the temptations of the day in which we live; and a compliance with the temptation, one of its vices. We have at length arrived at an era of the Christian church, when all the denominations into which it is divided, and all the congregations into which it is subdivided, have their public religious institutions for the diffusion of divine truth. These institutions cannot be supported without contributions—and these contributions must be matter of general notoriety. Like the tributary streams flowing into a great river, or like great rivers flowing into the sea, the contributions of associated congregations or communities, make up the general fund; but unlike the tributary streams which flow silently to form the mighty mass of waters, without requiring the ocean to publish to the universe the amount of each separate quota—the offerings of the different religious bodies must be announced to the uttermost farthing before the world. This perhaps is necessary, that the contributors may know that their bounty has not been stopped and swallowed up in its course. But has reached its destined receptacle—and such is the weakness of our principles, and the strength of our imperfections, that this publicity, to a certain extent, seems necessary to stimulate our languid zeal. But it has given opportunity, and that opportunity has been eagerly embraced, to establish a system of unhallowed vanity between the

different denominations and the various congregations into which the Christian church is divided.

Who can have heard the speeches, read the reports, and witnessed the proceedings of many of our public meetings, convened for the support of missionary societies, without being grieved at the 'strange fire' and 'diseased offerings' which have been brought to the altar of the Lord? The object of the meeting was good, for it was the destruction of an idolatry as insulting to Jehovah, as that which Jehu destroyed—but like the king of Israel, hundreds of voices exclaimed in concert, "Come, see our zeal for the Lord!" 'The image of jealousy' was lifted up in the temple of Jehovah—adulatory speakers chanted its praises in compliments upon the liberality of the worshipers—the multitude responded in shouts of applause to the tribute paid to their zeal—the praise of God was drowned amid the praise of men—and the crowd dispersed, in love with the cause, it is true—but more for their own sakes, than for the sake of God or of the heathen world!

Difficult indeed it is, with such hearts as ours, to do anything entirely pure from all admixture of a sinful nature. But when we take pains to make our zeal known—when we employ effort to draw public attention upon us—when we wish and design to make ourselves talked of, as a most extraordinary, liberal, and active people—when we listen for praises, and are disappointed if they do not come in the measure we expected, and feast upon them if they are presented—when we look with envy on those who have outstripped us, and we find no pleasure in any future efforts, because we cannot be first—when we look with jealousy on those who are approaching our level, and feel a new stimulus, not from a fresh perception of the excellence of the object—but from a fear that we shall be eclipsed in public estimation—when we talk of our fellow-workers, or to them, with disdain of their efforts, and with arrogant ostentation of our own—then indeed have we employed 'the cause' only as a pedestal on which to exalt ourselves! In pulling down one kind of idolatry, we have set up another, and rendered our contributions nothing better

than a costly sacrifice to our own vanity! All this is a lack of that Christian love which does not boast—and is not proud.

True zeal is modest and retiring—it is not like the scentless sunflower, which spreads its gaudy petals to the light of heaven, and turns its face to the orb of day through his course, as if determined to be seen. But like the modest violet, it hides itself in the bank, and sends forth its fragrance from its deep retirement. True zeal employs no trumpeter, it unfurls no banner, as the hypocrite does; but while conferring the most substantial benefits, it would, if it were possible, be like the angels, who while ministering to the heirs of salvation, are unseen and unknown by the objects of their benevolent attention!

Observe the manner in which love operates to the destruction of pride and vanity. Love, as we have already had frequent occasion to remark, is a desire to promote the happiness of those around us; but proud and vain people tend materially to impair this happiness. They generally excite disgust, frequently offer insult, and sometimes inflict pain. Their object is to impress you with a sense of their superiority—and thus wound and mortify your feelings. Caring little for your peace, they pursue a career of ridicule and scorn for others. They are dreaded by the weak, and despised by the wise. It is impossible to be happy in their society; for if you oppose them, you are insulted—if you submit to them, you are depreciated and degraded.

Love is essentially and unalterably attended with humility. Humility is the garment with which love is clothed—its inseparable and invariable costume. By humility, we do not intend the servility which crouches, or the lowliness that creeps, or the flattery which fawns—but a disposition to think lowly of our attainments, a tendency to dwell upon our defects rather than our excellences, an apprehension of our inferiority compared with those around us—with what we ought to be—and what we might be. It is always attended with that modest deportment, which neither boasts of itself, nor seeks to depreciate anyone. Humility is the inward feeling of meekness.

Modesty is the outward expression of humility. Humility leads a man to feel that he deserves little—modesty leads him to demand little.

"The ancient sages, amid all their eulogies upon virtue, and enquiries into the elements of moral excellence, not only valued humility at an exceedingly low estimate—but reckoned it a quality so contemptible as to neutralize the other properties which went, in their estimation, to the composition of a truly noble and exalted character. These sentiments have been adopted in modern times. By the touchstone which Christianity applies to the human character, it is found that pride and independence, which the world falsely dignifies with the epithet honorable, are really base alloy; and that of every character, formed upon proper principles, and possessed of genuine worth—humility is at once a distinguishing feature, and the richest ornament. And on this subject, as on every other, Christianity accords with the sentiments of right reason—that it is unquestionably the duty of every intelligent creature, especially every imperfect creature to be humble; for they have nothing which they have not received, and are indebted, in every movement they make, to an agency infinitely superior to their own."

Now, as divine revelation is the only system which either in ancient or in modern times assigns to humility the rank of a virtue, or makes provision for its cultivation, this in an eminent degree does both. It assigns to it the highest place, and a sort of pre-eminence among the graces of piety—bestows upon it the greatest commendations—enforces it by the most powerful motives—encourages it by the richest promises—draws it into exercise by the most splendid examples, and represents it as the brightest jewel in the Christian's crown.

Everything in the word of God is calculated to humble us—the description which it contains of the divine character, combining an infinitude of greatness, goodness, and glory, compared with which the loftiest being is an insignificant atom, and the purest heart as depravity itself; the view it gives us of innumerable orders of created

intelligences—all above man in the date of their existence, the capacity of their minds, and the elevation of their virtue; the account it preserves of the intellectual and moral perfection of man in his pristine innocence, and the discovery which it thus furnishes of the height from which he has fallen, and the contrast it thus draws between his present and his former nature; the declaration it makes of the purity of the eternal law, and the immeasurable depth at which we are thus seen to lie beneath our obligations; the history it exhibits of the circumstances of man's fall, of the progress of his sin, and of the numberless and awful deviations of his corruptions; the characteristics it affixes to his situation as a sinner, a rebel, an enemy of God, a child of wrath, an heir of perdition; the method it presents, by which he is redeemed from sin and hell—a scheme which he neither invented, nor thought of, nor aided—but which is a plan of grace, from first to last, even the grace of God, manifested in and through the atoning sacrifice of Christ—a plan which, in all its parts, and in all its bearings, seems expressly devised to exclude boasting; the means by which it asserts that the renovation and sanctification of the human heart are carried on, and its security to eternal life established even by the effectual operation of a divine agency; the sovereignty which it proclaims, as regulating the dispensations of celestial mercy; the examples which it holds forth of the astonishing self-abasement of others, so far superior to man in their mental and moral natures, such as the profound abasement of the angelic race—but especially the unparalleled humiliation of Him, who, though he was in the form of God, was found in the form of a servant.

These considerations, which are all drawn from the Scriptures, supply incentives to humility, which demonstrate upon Christian principles, that pride is the most unreasonable, as well as the most unrighteous thing in the universe. Pride is opposed, and humility is supported, by every possible view that we can take of divine revelation. An acquaintance with these great principles of inspired truth, at least an experimental knowledge of them, will bring down the loftiest of men's looks, and silence the tongue of arrogant boasting. Surely, surely, he who is conversant with these things will

see little cause for self-exaltation and pride; or for that self-publication, which is the essence of vanity.

While every true-hearted Christian is thankful that the Son of God stooped so low for his salvation, he will rejoice that his state of humiliation is past. "If you love me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father." The eclipse is over, the sun has resumed his original brightness, and the heavenly world is illuminated with his rays. That man in whom was no form nor loveliness for which he should be desired, sits upon the throne of the universe, wearing a crown of immortal glory, and is adored by angels and by men. His humility has conducted to honor; his sorrow has terminated in unspeakable joy. "Through the victories you gave, his glory is great; you have bestowed on him splendor and majesty. Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence." Psalm 21:5-6. Similar shall be the result in the case of those who follow his steps, and tread the lowly path in which he has commanded them to walk.

The crown of glory is reserved for the humble—but shame shall be the reward of the proud. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." There is no operation of Christian love more beautiful, none more scarce, than humility. Let professing Christians set themselves to work on their own proud hearts, and their own boasting tongues, remembering that they who sink the lowest in humility in this world—shall assuredly rise to the highest honor in the world to come!

The Decorum of Love

"Love does not behave itself unseemly."

"A station for every person, and every person in his station—a time for everything, and everything in its time—a manner for everything, and everything in its manner"—is a compendious and admirable rule for human conduct; and seems to approach very nearly to the property of love, which we are now to consider. There is some difficulty in ascertaining the precise idea which the apostle intended by the original term. Perhaps the most correct rendering is "indecorously" that is, unsuitable, improper, inappropriate, unfitting, or unbecoming—to our sex, rank, age, or circumstances. Love leads a man to know his place, and to keep it; and prevents all those deviations which, by disarranging the order, disturb the comfort of society.

This is so general and comprehensive a rule, that it would admit of application to all the various distinctions which exist in life. It is absolutely universal, and binds with equal force the monarch and the peasant, and all the numerous intermediate ranks. It imposes a consistency between a man's station and his conduct, viewed in the light of Christianity. It says to every man, "Consider your circumstances, and fulfill every just expectation to which they give rise." By the common consent of mankind, there is a certain line of conduct which belongs to every relation in life, and which cannot, perhaps, be better expressed, than by the word "becomingness," and which may be called the symmetry of society. We may select a few of the more prominent distinctions of society, and see how love preserves them without giving offense.

The relation of monarch and subject is one of the social ties; and in reference to this, love would prevent the ruler from employing the kingly power to crush the liberty, subvert the interests, or impoverish the resources of his people—while it would equally prevent the subject from despising the position, exposing the defects, evading the authority, disturbing the peace, or embarrassing the reign of the monarch. Tyranny on the part of the prince—and rebellion on the part of the subject, are equally unbecoming, and both are hostile to that love which seeks the happiness of the whole.

The distinction of male and female is to be supported by all propriety of conduct. On the part of the man, if he be single, all trifling with the affections, all brashness, all taking advantage of the weakness of the other sex, is explicitly forbidden. If he is married, all neglect, oppression, and unkindness towards his wife, is explicitly forbidden. What a horrid inappropriateness is it on the part of a husband to become either the slave or the tyrant of his wife—either in pitiful weakness to abdicate the throne of domestic government, or to make her a crouching vassal trembling in its shadow! And how disgusting a spectacle is it to see a husband abandoning the society of his wife for the company of other females, and flirting, though perhaps with no criminal intention, with either single or married women.

On the other hand, how unseemly in unmarried women, is a bold obtrusiveness of manner, an impudent forwardness of address, a clamorous and monopolizing strain of conversation, an evident attempt to attract the attention of the other sex. Modesty is the brightest ornament of the female character—its very becomingness. And women, if married, should be keepers at home, and not gossips abroad—should look well to the ways of their household, and preside over its affairs in the meekness of wisdom; for domestic indolence and neglect is in a wife and a mother most improper! Nor is it less offensive to see the female head of a family usurping the seat of government, and reducing her husband to the rank of mere vassal to the 'queen'. Women never act more unsuitable than when they become meddling busybodies—either in politics or church affairs. Nothing can be more offensive than to see a female busybody running from house to house to raise a party, and to influence an ecclesiastical decision; forgetting that her place is home, and her duty to learn in silence from her husband. Whatever admiration has been bestowed on the heroic females of Sparta, who fought by the side of their husbands, no such eulogy can be offered to ecclesiastical heroines, whose martial ardor leads them into the arena of church contentions. Christian love would repress all unfit, indecorous zeal.

Parents and children will be guarded by love, if they yield to its influence, from all unbecoming conduct. Fathers will neither be tyrannical nor too indulgent; will neither govern their children as slaves with a rod of iron, nor relaxing all discipline, throw the reins into their children's hands. For how incongruous is tyranny with a relation that implies the tenderest affection—and how unseemly is a cessation of rule in one who is invested by heaven with a sacred authority. Becomingness on the part of children requires the most prompt and willing obedience, the most genuine and manifest affection, the most respectful and humble demeanour towards parents, with the most anxious and ingenuous endeavors to promote their parent's happiness. Everything approaching to improper familiarity, much more to pertness, most of all to unmanageability of manner, in a child towards a parent, is unbecoming in the last degree. In those cases where the high moral and intellectual qualities of parents are such as almost to command the exercise of filial piety from children, there is no difficulty in rendering it. But where these qualities are not possessed by the parents, there is greater danger of young people forgetting what is due to the parental relation, and acting very improperly towards those who, whatever may be their faults, are still their parents. It is excessively unbecoming to hear children of any age, however matured or advanced, exposing, perhaps ridiculing, their parents' infirmities, treating their opinions with scorn, reproving or upbraiding them to their face. Let all young people recollect that whatever may be the character of a parent, "a mother is a mother still—the holiest thing alive."

In the realm of employment—the distinctions of superiors and inferiors—it is very easy to see what kind of conduct is seemly, and what is unsuitable. To the superior, becomingness will prohibit all improper familiarity—for this generates contempt; and at the same time all pride and arrogance, together with all insulting condescension. Inferiors are most tenderly alive, most keenly susceptible of all real or supposed slights from those above them and the feelings excited by such treatment are of the most painful kind. Pride is the most cruel of the passions, being utterly reckless of the

wounds which it inflicts, the groans which it extorts, or the tears which it causes to flow. Even in its mildest exercise, by a look of scorn, by a word of insult, it often transfixes a barbed arrow in the bosom of an inferior; while by its deliberate and persevering scheme of mortification, it remorselessly crucifies the object of its contempt. O, how unbecoming to employ superiority only as an eminence from whence, as with a sort of vulture ferocity, we might pounce with greater force on a victim below! Dignified affability is the becomingness of superiority, which while it does not remove the line of distinction, does not render it painfully visible. Love will make us cautious not to wound the feelings of others by talking to them of our superiority, or by making them in any way feel it.

On the part of inferiors, it will prevent all encroaching familiarity—all presuming upon manifested kindness—all attempt, or even wish, to level the distinctions of society—all crude, uncourteous, uncivil demeanor. Some people seem to act as if religion removed the obligation to civility, declared war with courtesy, and involved a man in hostility with whatever things are lovely. Incivility or rudeness manifested by the poor to the rich, by servants to masters, or by the illiterate to the well-informed—is unfriendly to the peace and good order of society, and therefore contrary to Christian love.

Old age and youth are also distinctions requiring a suitable or becoming line of conduct. Levity, silliness, and folly, are among the qualities which would be indecorous in the elder. While obtrusiveness, forwardness, excessive talkativeness, and obstinacy, would be unseemly in the latter. Elders should treat youth with kindness and forbearance; while youth should treat elders with reverence, respect, and deference.

These distinctions, when carried into the church, where they exist as well as in the world, should be maintained under the most powerful influence of the holy disposition which we are now illustrating. This will teach us with all toleration and impartiality to judge of our station, and to adorn it with actions that are suitable to it. Anything

unbecoming is sure to give offense, and to produce discomfort. Whether our rank be high or low—we cannot violate the rule which prescribes its duties, without occasioning pain.

Men are united in society like the organs and limbs in the human body; and no one, in either case, can be put out of its place without producing uneasiness in the rest. The object of love is to keep all in their proper places, and thus to promote the well-being of the whole.

There is another sense which this expression will bear, and that is, love does not allow its possessor to act unworthy of his profession as a disciple of Christ. Consistency is beauty, and the lack of it, whatever excellences may exist, is deformity. The brightest displays of moral worth in some things, if associated with obvious and great improprieties in others—lose all their attraction and power to edify or delight—and are the occasion of pain instead of pleasure to the spectator. The rule which the apostle has laid down is particularly worthy of the attention of us all—"Whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things." It is not enough for us to acknowledge practically the claims of truth, purity, and justice—but we must also meet and answer every expectation which our profession and our principles have raised. Whatever is generally esteemed to be lovely—whatever is usually spoken of as excellent—whatever it be to which by general consent we attach the idea of the attractive, and the honorable, and the praiseworthy—that must a follower of Christ consider to be the matter of his duty.

There is nothing good in itself, or advantageous to others—nothing that is calculated to edify by the power of example, or to bless in the way of direct energy and influence—nothing that is calculated to give pleasure or to remove distress—but what is implied in the very nature of true piety. True religion is the likeness of God in the soul of man—and a Christian is truly an imitator of God—hence he is called "to walk worthy of God,"—to act as becomes one who professes to bear the divine image. Let anyone contemplate the moral attributes

of God—and think what that man ought to be, who professes to give to the world, as a living miniature representation of this infinitely glorious Being! On the ground of consistency he should be blameless and harmless; a follower only of that which is good; holy in all manner of conversation and godliness; a beautiful specimen of whatever is noble, dignified, generous, and useful.

The world takes us at our word; they accept our profession as the rule of their expectation; and although they often look for too much, considering the present imperfect state of human nature, yet to a certain extent their demands are authorized by our own declarations. What in reason may not be looked for, from one who professes to have received the temper of heaven, the impress of eternity, the nature of God? Hence, the least 'deviations from rectitude' are apparent in those who profess such things; the least 'specks of imperfection' are conspicuous on so bright a ground; faults stand out in bold and obtrusive prominence, on such a profession. Our profession invites the eye of scrutiny—we are not allowed to pass the ordeal of public opinion without the most rigid scrutiny; we are brought out from obscurity, and held up to be examined in the light of the sun. Failings which would escape detection in others, are quickly discerned and loudly proclaimed in us; and it is therefore of immense consequence that we should take care what manner of people we are. Without consistency, even our good, will be evil spoken of. The least violation of this rule will attach suspicion to the most distinguished virtues, and bring discredit on the best of our actions.

A lack of consistency, is a violation of the law of love in various ways. By exciting a prejudice against true religion, it does harm to the souls of men. It makes them satisfied with their state as unconverted people, by leading them to consider all other professors of true religion, as a hypocrite. It is very true that this is unfair; that it is attending more to exceptions than the general rule; that it is giving credence to little things, and allowing them to have an influence which is denied to the greater and more prevailing parts of the

character. But as this is their way, it makes every departure from consistency on our part, not only sinful—but injurious—not only guilty in the sight of God—but cruel towards man.

The minor faults of Christians do more harm, in the way of hardening the heart of sinners, than the greatest excesses of the openly wicked; for this reason—that nothing else is expected from the latter. Their conduct excites no surprise, and produces no disappointment. We have not been sufficiently aware of this—we have confined our attention too exclusively to the avoiding of open immorality—we have not directed our solicitude enough to "the whatever things are lovely and of good report." To the question, "What do you do, more than others?" we have thought it enough to answer, "We are more pure, more true, more devotional, more zealous," without being careful to be more dignified, more honorable, more generous in all things. Little things have been forgotten in the contemplation of great ones; secret faults have been lost sight of in the abhorrence of presumptuous sins.

A lack of becomingness is a violation of the law of love in another way—it excites a prejudice against our brethren, and involves them in our failings. By inconsistent conduct, we bring suspicion upon others, and thus subject them to much undeserved ridicule. The world deals unfairly with us we admit, not only making us answerable for the conduct of each other—but also in imputing only our 'failings' to all other Christians; for however splendid and remarkable may be the Christian excellences that any of our number possess, however brilliant the example of a rare and eminent believer may be, they do not let his brightness fall upon the rest. He is alone in his 'excellences'—but his 'sins' are generally imputed to all Christians—and the shadow of one transgression is made to stretch, perhaps, over a whole community. What an argument is this with us all for consistency—for what cruelty is it to our brethren to involve them in unmerited reproach—by our inconsistencies!

Besides, what a grief of mind is the unworthiness of one member—to all who are associated with him in the fellowship of the Gospel. When a member of a church has acted unbecomingly, and caused the ways of godliness to be spoken badly of—what a wound has been inflicted on the body! For if one member suffers in his reputation, all the rest must, so far as their peace is concerned, suffer with him. This is one of the finest displays of Christian sympathy—one of the purest exhibitions of love—of love to God, to Christ, to man, to holiness. The misconduct of their erring brother has occasioned no loss to them of worldly substance, or bodily ease, or social comfort; but it has dishonored Christ, has injured, in public estimation, the cause of true religion, and this has touched the tenderest chord of the renewed heart.

What affliction has sometimes been circulated through a whole church by the unbecoming behavior of a single member! The apostle has given a very striking proof of this, in his representation of the feelings of the Corinthian church, after they had taken a right view of the delinquency of the incestuous person. "Just see what this godly sorrow produced in you! Such earnestness, such concern to clear yourselves, such indignation, such alarm, such zeal, and such a readiness to punish the wrongdoer." This is only a counter-part of what often happens now, and shows that everything unseemly is a most flagrant offense against the rule of Christian love.

Unbecomingness may be considered also not only in a general point of view—but as having reference to our conduct towards our BRETHREN—and may mean anything unsuitable to, or out of character with, our profession as church members. Improper treatment of the pastor, is obviously a lack of the decorum of love. If his office be disesteemed, and his scriptural authority resisted; if attempts be made to lower him in the opinion of the church, and to deprive him of the rule with which he is invested by the Lord Jesus Christ; if his opinion is treated with disrespect, and his just influence over the feelings of his flock be undermined; if he be rudely and impertinently addressed; if he be unnecessarily opposed in his

schemes for public or private usefulness; if his sermons be despised or neglected, and his ecclesiastical administration treated with suspicion or contempt; if his temporal support be scantily or grudgingly afforded; if his comfort be not carefully consulted and assiduously built up—there is a flagrant unbecomingness on the part of church members, who are enjoined to "obey those who have the rule over them," "to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake," and "to hold such in honor."

Lust for power, and an ambitious desire for dominating influence, is manifestly unbecoming in one who acknowledges himself the member of a society where all are equals, and all are the servants of a Master who has thus addressed his disciples—"You know that in this world kings are tyrants, and officials lord it over the people beneath them. But among you it should be quite different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must become your slave. For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:25-28.

A love of power seems almost inherent in the human bosom, and is an operation of that selfishness which enters so deeply into the essence of original sin. Nothing can be more opposed to love than this. Unbridled ambition, in its progress through its bustling and violent career—is the most unsocial and uncharitable passion that can exist. The furies are its allies, and it tramples down in its course all the charities and courtesies of life. When this disposition has taken full possession of the heart, there is no cruelty which it will hesitate to inflict, no desolation of which it will scruple to be the cause. The lesser exhibitions of this vice, and its more moderated energies, will still be attended with some proofs of its unsocial nature. Let a man once desire to be preeminent and predominant, as it respects influence or power, and he will not be very regardless of the feelings of those whom he desires to subjugate.

It is much to be deplored that the Christian church should ever be the field where rival candidates for power struggle for superiority! Yet how often has this been seen to be the case, not merely in the Catholic conclave, where aspiring cardinals have put in motion all their artifice, and finesse, and duplicity, to gain the tiara; not merely among mitred prelates for a higher seat on the episcopal bench—no; but also among the lay-brethren of an independent church. How anxious and restless have they sometimes appeared—to be leading men, influential members, the most admired minister, and the ruling elders of the church. They must not only be consulted in everything—but consulted first. Every plan must emanate from them, or else be approved by them before it is submitted to the rest. The apostle has drawn their picture to the life, where he says—"I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church." 3 John 1:9-10

Such an individual must be a source of discomfort to his brethren in communion. There may be no competitor with him for the scepter who regards him with envy—but the whole community are grieved and offended with his unlovely and encroaching disposition. It is pretty evident to me that Diotrephes was a minister; but the features of this picture apply with equal force to an ambitious and aspiring layman, whose lust of power is still more censurable, as it has not even the basis of office to rest upon.

There are cases, it is admitted, in which experience, wisdom, benevolence, and activity, are so beautifully combined in an individual—as to place him, more by general consent than by his own efforts—above all his brethren in influence. When he opens his mouth in wisdom, all are silent—and the pastor hearkens with the rest in respectful deference to his opinion. No one would think of proposing any scheme until he had been consulted, and his disapproval mildly expressed would be thought a sufficient reason

for laying it aside. He has power—but it has come to him without his seeking it, and it is employed, not to exalt himself—but to benefit the church. His sway is the influence of love—and all that influence is employed by him, not to raise himself into a rival with his pastor for the upper seat in the church—but to support the authority and dignity of the pastoral office. Such men we have sometimes seen in our communities, and they have been a blessing to the people and a comfort to the minister. If any individuals could have been found in the circle where they moved, so flippant and so forward as to treat them with the least degree of disrespect, everyone would have been loud in the expression of their disapprobation of such an act of censurable indecorum.

Unseemliness in the conduct of a church member towards his brethren, applies to all that is rude, unmannerly, or uncivil. "No ill-bred man," says Adam Clarke, in his comments on this word, "or what is commonly termed rude or unmannerly, is a consistent Christian. I never wish to meet with those who affect to be called 'blunt, honest men'—who feel themselves above all the forms of civility and respect—and care not how many they put to pain—how many they displease."

There is much good sense in these remarks, that deserves the attention of all professing Christians who have the credit of true religion, and the comfort of their brethren at heart. It is inconceivable what a great degree of unnecessary distress is occasioned by a disregard of this rule, and how many hearts are continually bleeding from the wounds inflicted by incivility and rudeness! We should be careful to avoid this; for true piety gives no man a release from the courtesies of life! In our private communion with our brethren, we should be anxious to give no offense. If we feel it our duty at any time, as we sometimes may and ought, to expostulate with a brother on the impropriety of his conduct, we should be most studiously cautious to abstain from all appearance of what is impertinently meddlesome, or offensively blunt. Reproof, or even admonition, is rarely palatable—even when administered with

the honied sweetness of Christian kindness. But it is wormwood and gall when mingled up with uncourteousness, and will generally be rejected with disdain and disgust. We must never think of acting the part of a reprover, until we have put on humility as a garment, and taken up the law of kindness in our lips.

Nothing is more likely to lead to incivility, than repeated and vexatious interruptions when engaged in some interesting or important business, or when required to comply with unreasonable requests. I have known cases in which, when application has been made for what the applicant thought to be a very reasonable matter, his request has been treated with such scorn, and denied with such abruptness and coarseness of manner, as to send him home with an arrow in his heart; when a few moments spent in explanation, or a denial given in kind and respectful language, would have completely satisfied him.

It is admitted that it is somewhat trying, and it is a trial of very common occurrence in the present day, to be called from important occupations to listen to tales of woe, to read the statement of need, or to answer the enquiries of ignorance; but still we must not be, ought not to be, crude. Sudden interruptions are apt to throw a man off his guard—he has scarcely time to call into exercise his principles, before his passions are up and busy. It is said of Mr. Romaine, that he was one day called upon by a poor woman in distress of soul, for the purpose of gaining instruction and consolation. The good man was busy in his study; and on being informed that a poor woman wanted to converse with him below, exclaimed with great incivility of manner, "Tell her I cannot attend to her!" The humble applicant, who was within hearing distance, said, "Ah, Sir! your Master would not have treated thus a burdened penitent who came to him for mercy." "No, no!" replied the good man, softened by an appeal which his heart could not resist, "he would not—come in, come in!"

Too, too often has the same petulant indecorum been manifested by others, without being accompanied by the same reparation—they

have pierced the heart, and left the wound to fester—the petitioners have carried away from their door their misery not only unrelieved—but greatly aggravated. But there is a peculiar sensitiveness on the subject of monetary contributions in some people—to ask for them is an offense, which they pay back in insult. They are the Nabals of the church—if, indeed, the church could have a Nabal. What can be more unseemly than words which would disgrace a man—dropping from the lips of a professing Christian!

Unbecoming rudeness should be most sedulously avoided, in our public communion with the church, and in our social circles, when meeting as brethren. Everything of flat contradiction, of unwarrantable suspicion concerning the truth of a statement; all seeming contempt for the opinions of others; all attempts to interrupt or bear down by clamor and vehemence, those with whom we may be engaged in discussion, should be very anxiously abstained from. It is truly painful to observe, what an utter disregard for the feelings of their brethren is often manifested by some ardent sticklers for their own opinions and plans. But is not courteousness a Christian grace? Did not the apostle say, 'Be courteous'? Why should that which is considered by the world, as a rich decoration of character, as softening and embellishing the communion of society, and as so important and necessary as to be placed under the guardianship of what is called the law of honor—why should courteousness ever be considered as of little importance in the business of true religion, and the fellowship of the faithful? If rudeness be considered as a blemish upon talents, rank, and fame—must it not be viewed also as a blot and deformity upon piety? Most certainly it is regarded as such those whose concern to do whatever would give pleasure, and to avoid whatever would occasion distress.

We see in this subject the wonderful excellence of Christianity as a code of morals, a rule of conduct, and a body of principles. For in addition to specific laws, intended to operate in the production of certain virtues and the prevention of certain vices—it has general and comprehensive precepts, capable of universal application—of so

plain a nature as to be understood by the dullest intellect—and possessing at the same time a kind of beauty which gives them an interest in every heart. So that if in the specialities of Christian morals, properly so called, any case should be overlooked, or any situation should not be reached—any distinction between virtue and vice should be so minute as to be imperceptible—any delicacy of character so refined as not to be taken into the account—here is something to supply the defect, and render the law of God perfect for converting the soul. Love does not act unbecomingly! And who is so ignorant, if he would but consult his conscience, as not to know what would be thought by others unbecoming in himself?

The Unselfishness of Love

"Love seeks not her own."

"Love is not self-seeking."

If it were required to give a brief and summary description of man's original apostasy, we might say that it was his departure from God, the fountain of his happiness and the end of his existence, and retiring into himself, as the ultimate end of all his actions. And if it were also asked what is the essence of his sin, the sum of his moral depravity, we might say, to love himself supremely, to seek himself finally and exclusively, to make self, in one shape or another, the center to which all his busy thoughts, anxious cares and diligent pursuits, constantly tend. Self-love is the most active and reigning principle in fallen nature; self is the great idol which mankind are naturally disposed to worship; and selfishness the grand interest to which they are devotedly attached. But the grace of God, when it renews the heart, so corrects and subdues this disposition, that it is no longer the tyrant of the mind. The grace of God plants in the human bosom, the principle of benevolence—a principle which as it

leads us to love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves—and is the direct opposite of selfishness.

Believing that the perfection of all virtue lies in unselfish love, it follows, that the nearer we approach to this state of mind, the nearer we come to sinless moral excellence. This is the temper of the innumerable company of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect. It has been argued that we take delight in the happiness of others, because their happiness increases our own—but the circumstance of our happiness being increased by promoting theirs, is itself a convincing proof of the existence and exercise of an antecedent good-will towards them. Our felicity is raised by theirs. Why?—because we love them. Why am I made unhappy by the sight of another's woe?—because I have good-will to the subject of distress. It is true I am gratified by relieving him, and my comfort would be disturbed if I did not—but what is the origin of these feelings?—certainly a previous good-will towards them. It is not affirmed that all pity proceeds from holy love—but that where love does exist, and in the proportion in which it exists, it is unselfish, and is distinguished from selfishness.

It may be proper here to distinguish between self-love and selfishness; not that they are etymologically different—but only in the use of the terms as they are employed in common discourse. By SELFISHNESS, we mean such a regard to our own things, as is inconsistent with, and destructive of—a right regard to the things of others. Whereas by SELF-LOVE we mean nothing more than that attention to our own affairs which we owe to ourselves as part of universal being. Selfishness means the neglect or injury of others, in order to concentrate our views, and desires, and pursuits in ourselves. While self-love means only that proper and due regard to our own interests which we may pay, without the neglect or injury of our neighbor. Self-love, when exercised in connection with, and subordinate to, good-will to mankind—is not only consistent with virtue—but is a part of it; but when not thus connected, it degenerates into selfishness.

Selfishness leads men to seek their own interests—in opposition to the interest of others. Multitudes care not whom they oppress, so as they can establish their own power; whom they vilify and degrade, so as they can increase their own fame; whom they impoverish, so as they can accumulate their own wealth; whom they distress, so as they can augment their own comforts. This is the worst and most cruel operation of selfishness. It is the same propensity, only sharpened, and guided, and rendered the more mischievous by the aid of reason—as that which exists in the vulture and the tiger, and which gorges itself to excess—deaf to the piercing cries of the hapless victim which struggles in its talons! Intent only on gratification, it riots amid misery, if by this means it can aggrandize itself. Looking on the possessions of those around only with an envious eye, it is solicitous that they may be appropriated in some way, to itself. This is a horrible and truly infernal disposition; for it would reign with a kind of universal despotism, would subdue all into vassalage, and allow nothing to exist—but what was tributary to its own comfort.

Selfishness sometimes leads its subjects only to neglect the things of others. They do not oppress, or injure, or steal; they are neither robbers nor calumniators; but they are so engrossed by self-interest, and so absorbed in self-gratification, as to be utterly regardless of the miseries of the world around them. They have no sympathies, no benevolent sensibilities—they have cut themselves off from their race, and care nothing for the happiness of any of their neighbors. Their highest boast and attainment in virtue is "to wrong no one." Their idea of excellence is purely of a negative kind. To dispel sorrow, to relieve poverty, to diffuse gladness—especially to make sacrifices to do this—is an effort which they have never tried, and which they have no inclination to try. The world might perish—so long as the desolation did not reach themselves! Miserable and guilty creatures, they forget that they will be punished for not doing good—as well as for doing evil. The unprofitable servant was condemned, and the wicked are represented, at the last day, as doomed to hell—not for inflicting sorrow—but for not relieving it.

A man is guilty of selfishness, if he seeks his own things out of all proportion to the regard he pays to the things of others. From a regard to our reputation, we may not live in the total neglect of those around us; and in deference either to public opinion, or to the remonstrances of our consciences, we may be compelled to yield something to the claims of the public. Yet, at the same time, our concessions may be so measured in quantity, and made with such reluctance and ill-will—that our predominant selfishness may be as clearly manifested by what we give—as by what we withhold. That which we call our liberality, manifests, in this case, our avarice; that which we denominate generosity, demonstrates our sinful self-love.

Selfishness sometimes seeks its own under the pretense and profession of promoting the happiness of others. Where the ruling passion of the heart is the love of applause—large sacrifices of wealth, and time, and ease, and feeling, will be readily made for fame! And where men have objects to gain, which require kindness, conciliation, and attention—nothing in this way is too much to be done to accomplish their purpose. This is a disgusting operation of this very disgusting temper, when all its seeming good-will is but an efflux of kindness—which is to flow back again in full tide into the receptacle of self! Many are the detestable traders, whose generosity is only a barter for something in return. How much of the seeming goodness of human nature, of the sympathy with human woe, of the pity for poverty, of the concern for the comfort of wretchedness—which passes current for virtue among mankind—is nothing better than a counterfeit imitation of benevolence—is known only to that God whose omniscient eye traces the secret workings of our depravity through all the labyrinths of a deceitful heart!

But notice now the SUBJECTS in reference to which selfishness is indulged.

Property is the first. It shows itself in an concern to obtain wealth, and an unwillingness to part with it—a disposition as greedy as the sea, and as barren as the shore. You will see some men so excessively

eager to get profit, that they are ever watching to take undue advantage; and so keen-eyed in looking after their own, that they need be closely inspected, to prevent them from taking more than their own—for a man who is prevailingly selfish can hardly be honest. And what they gain, they keep—neither the cause of humanity, nor of true religion, can extort a farthing from them—except now and then, to get rid of an importunate suitor, or to prevent their reputation from being utterly ruined.

Selfishness is sometimes exercised in reference to opinion. Some will not bear contradiction; they must be listened to as sages; to question what they say, is to insult them—and is sure to bring down on the 'presumptuous skeptic' their contempt or their frown. They will scarcely allow any one to speak but themselves; they must be the oracle of every company, and the director of every affair—or they retire in disgust, and refuse to act at all. In the concerns of our churches this is often seen and felt. What is it but pure selfishness that leads any one to wish that he should dictate to the rest; that his opinion should be law; and his wishes be consulted and obeyed? This is not love—no! love does not seek her own, where conscience does not interfere to forbid it—but meekly and quietly resigns its wishes to increase peace and promote harmony. Love's object is the public good, and its law is the best means of promoting the general welfare.

If in the communion of life, or the affairs of a church, every individual determined to consult only his own views and wishes, society would be dissolved, and its separate parts embroiled in a state of mutual conflict. In the various discussions which come before a public body, Selfishness says, "I am sure my opinion is correct; and I will if possible have my way!" But the language of LOVE is, "I have stated my opinion and my wishes; if this does not carry conviction, I by no means wish my opinion to be adopted, nor my desires to be gratified—I am anxious for the comfort of my brethren, and I yield my wishes to theirs."

Some people have acquired selfish habits in their general conduct, which are exceedingly annoying to others! They have areas of personal gratification, peculiarities of humour, in which it is impossible to indulge without greatly incommoding those around them; but so detestably selfish is their disposition, at least with regard to these practices, that let others be disturbed, offended, or put to serious inconvenience—they themselves will not forego in the least degree their accustomed indulgence. When the unfortunate sufferers were expiring in the Black Hole at Calcutta, and entreated the sentinels to represent their agonizing and fatal condition to the tyrant who had imprisoned them, the guards answered, "No; he is enjoying his repose, and it will be certain death to us if we disturb him, even for your relief." And what better in principle, though certainly a less degree of its operation, is that regard to their appetite, ease, or humour—which many indulge to the annoyance of their neighbors, and which they indulge against the remonstrances of those who suffer? In short, that regard to our comfort, which leads us to neglect or sacrifice the felicity of another—is the selfishness which kindness opposes and destroys.

This hateful disposition has contrived to conceal itself under many false names and DISGUISES, and thus to find protection from much of the ridicule which it deserves, and which would otherwise be more unsparingly heaped upon it.

The plea of frugality—or a just regard to the claims of a family—has often been urged as an excuse for the selfishness of avarice. A man certainly must take care of his own—but not to the injury, or even to the neglect of all besides. "I have no more," it is often said, "than I need for my style of living; and that style I think necessary for my rank in life. I spend all I get upon my family, and hoard nothing—how, then, can I be selfish?" Mistaken mortal! do you forget that a man's family is himself multiplied—himself reflected? Selfish! yes, you are detestably so—if you spend all upon yourself and family—however lavish and unsparing you may be to them.

No expression, no sentiment, has ever been more abused than that of the apostle—"Do all to the glory of God." It has been employed to disguise the most improper motives, and never more frequently, nor more profanely employed, than when it has been used to give a character of religious zeal to actions—which every other eye could discern, originated in unmixed selfishness. It is to be feared that when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, it will be found that while much has been professedly done for the glory of God in the affairs of true religion—pure zeal for God's glory is a very rare thing. Certain it is, that much of what has been carried on under the authority of this truly sublime phrase, has emanated from a far less hallowed principle.

The Gospel has been preached by ministers; places of worship have been built by hearers; distant lands have been visited by missionaries; yes, imprisonment and death may have been sought by martyrs, in some cases, not from pure zeal for God's glory—but under the influence of selfishness! All sorts of artful practices have been supported—all kinds of stormy passions have been indulged—all kinds of injuries have been inflicted—under the pretense of glorifying God—but which, in fact, are to be ascribed to selfishness! When a man is identified with a party—what he does for that party—he does for himself.

The same remarks will apply to many of those actions which are performed on the professed ground of regard for the public good. Pure patriotism is a scarce virtue, and is found but rarely in the bosoms of those who are loudest in their praises and professions of it. Many a noisy and self-eulogized patriot—many a zealous supporter of public institutions—many an active reformer of popular errors—many a liberal contributor to humane or religious societies—could their motives be exposed, would be found to act from no higher aims than to get a name for themselves—and to be praised by their fellow-creatures!

Some indulge this disposition under the pretext of regard for the truth. Attaching an overweening importance to their own opinions, as if they possessed the attribute of infallibility, overbearing in debate, impatient when contradicted, determined to crush the opinions and resist the influence of those who are opposed to theirs—they quiet their conscience, and silence the voice of remonstrance, with the plea that their vehemence is pure zeal for the interests of truth. They would be less anxious, they say, if it were their personal interests at stake; but they have a right to be earnest, yes, even to be contentious—in the defense of the faith! But they don't know themselves—or they would discern that their conduct springs from a proud, imperious, and selfish spirit!

It is time to contemplate the EVIL of selfishness.

Selfishness is the direct opposite to divine benevolence, and is contrary to the habitual temper of our Lord Jesus Christ, "who pleased not himself." Selfishness is the cause of all sin, the opposite of all holiness and virtue. Selfishness is the source of innumerable other sins, and is placed by the apostle as the head and leader of the eighteen vices which he enumerates as the marks of perilous times—"Men shall be lovers of themselves." Selfishness was the sin which introduced all guilt and misery into the world—for the first transgression, by which Adam fell from innocence, and by which his posterity fell with him, was an effort to raise himself into a state of independence; by selfishness he laid the world under the burden of the divine condemnation! Selfishness is a rejection of all the claims, and an opposition to all the ends and interests of society; for if all people were under the influence of predominant selfishness, society could scarcely exist! Let each one seek and grasp his own, to the injury or neglect of the rest, and the world becomes a den of wild beasts, where each plunders for his prey, and all distress one another.

Selfishness defeats its own end. God has endowed us with social affections, in the indulgence of which there is real pleasure—the

exercise of kindness and the enjoyment of delight are inseparable. "If there be any comfort of love," says the apostle; by which he implied, in the strongest manner, that there is great comfort in it; and, of course, in proportion as we extend the range and multiply the objects of our love, we extend the range and multiply the sources of our happiness. He who loves only himself, has only one joy; he who loves his neighbors, has many. To rejoice in the happiness of others, is to make it our own; to produce it, is to make it more than our own. Lord Bacon has justly remarked, that our sorrows are lessened, and our felicities multiplied, by sharing them.

Mankind had been laboring for ages under the grossest mistake as to happiness, imagining that happiness arose from receiving—an error which our Lord corrects, by saying, "That it is more blessed to give than to receive." A selfish man, who accumulates property—but diffuses not, resembles the stagnant pools, into which whatever flows remains there, and whatever remains corrupts! He is not like the perennial fountain sending forth fertilizing streams! Miser is his name, and miserable he is in heart. Selfishness often brings a terrible retribution in this world—the tears of its wretched subject fall unpitied—and he finds, in the gloomy hour of his want or his woe, that he who determines to be alone in his fullness, will generally be left to himself in his sorrows; and that he who in the days of his prosperity drives every one from him by the unkindness of his disposition, will find in the season of his adversity, that they are too far off to hear his cries for assistance.

Selfishness is not an incurable temper—but it is a disease that requires an immediate and diligent attention! Where selfishness not only exists but predominates, the spring of human action must be renewed by regeneration, and we must have that new heart, which is brought to love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves. We must meditate often upon the deep criminality of selfishness, and look upon it in all its deformity, until we hate it! We must be careful to strip it of all the disguises which the deceitfulness of the heart has thrown over it! We must abound in contemplation of the character of

God, as infinite in love; and of Jesus Christ, as an incarnation of pure, unselfish affection. We must exercise great mortification, laboring to the uttermost to subdue, and if possible to eradicate, this vile disposition! And repeating this again and again until we begin to taste the pleasure and to feel the habit of kindness. Above all, we must pray earnestly for the help of the Holy Spirit—to assist us in the mighty work of vanquishing a selfish temper!

The Trustfulness of Love

"Love thinks no evil."

There are two senses which may be attached to this beautiful description of love.

I. Love does not DEVISE evil. What a horrible, demon-like disposition has the Psalmist ascribed to the individual who has no fear of God before his eyes!—"He has left off to be wise and to do good; he devises mischief upon his bed." Such is the delineation given by the inspired writer of the character of some wretched men; and the original is often to be found. They are perpetually scheming to do injury; even their hours of rest are devoted to the impulses of a wicked heart, and they sleep not except they have done mischief. Instead of communing with God upon their bed, this is to commune with the devil, and to hold nightly conference with him who goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But without going to the extent of those who live by plunder, extortion, or oppression, and who, as the wolves and tigers of society, are ever prowling about for their prey—there are many who maintain a tolerably respectable character—but are still far too busy in devising evil—this may arise from various motives, to all of which Christian love stands firmly opposed.

Desire of gain may lead them to devise means by which they may injure a more prosperous neighbor, a more thriving tradesman than themselves. They cannot endure to witness his success, and they leave no effort untried to hinder it. They are inventive in the way of insinuation, innuendo, or explicit declaration—to check the tide of his good fortune, and are ever scheming to circumvent and injure him. Or they may be moved by envy to devise means for blasting the reputation of a popular rival, or at least to render him less a favorite with the public. Revenge is ever busy in laying plans to injure its object; it broods in wrathful silence over the real or supposed injury, and looks round on every side for the opportunity and the means of full retaliation.

A love of sporting with the fears of the timid and the weak has led some to delight in finding means for exciting their alarms—they do not desire to inflict pain so much from a malignity of disposition as from a wanton pleasure in raising a joke. Such jests as occasion distress are, whatever may be pretended by their authors, a kind of devil's play, who can never relax from the work of tormenting, except it be to occasion lighter pains, and whose very sport is the infliction of misery.

It is dreadful that the human intellect should ever be employed in devising evil; and yet passing by the cabinets of statesmen, where hostile and unprincipled aggressions are so often planned against a weaker state; and the closets of monarchs, where schemes which are to entail the horrors of war upon millions, are contrived without compunction; and the slave-merchant's cabin, where the details are arranged for burning peaceful villages, and dragging into captivity their unoffending inhabitants; and the robber's cave, the murderer's chamber, and the swindler's retreat—passing by these haunts of demons, where the master-spirits of mischief hold their conclave, and digest their dark and horrid purposes—what a prodigious movement of mind is perpetually going on among ordinary people! What a frightful portion of every day's employment of the mental and bodily energies, all over the globe, is seen by the eye of

Omniscience to be directed by the parent of evil, who is ever going about to do evil—so that a great part of mankind seem to have no other prototype but the scorpions which John saw rising out of the bottomless pit, armed both with teeth and stings!

To all these people, and to all this their conduct—love is diametrically opposed. It thinks not evil—but good; it devises to communicate pleasure—not pain. It shrinks back with instinctive abhorrence from inflicting a moment's suffering, in body or in mind. "Love works no ill to its neighbor," but employs all its counsels and its cares for its benefit. Like a good spirit, it is ever opposing the advice, and counteracting the influence—of envy, revenge, or avarice. It would make the miserable happy, and the happy still happier. It retires into the closet to project schemes for blessing mankind, and then goes out into the crowded regions of want and wretchedness to execute them; it devises good on its bed, and rises in the morning to fulfill the plans of mercy with which it had sunk to rest. "Love thinks no evil."

2. But most probably the apostle meant, that love does not IMPUTE evil. Lovely love! the farther we go, the more we discover your charms—your beauty is such, that it is seen the more, the more closely it is inspected—and your excellence such, that it never ceases to grow upon acquaintance. You are not in haste to incriminate, as if it were your delight to prove men wicked—but are willing to impute a good motive to men's actions, until a bad one is clearly demonstrated.

It is proper however to remark here, that love is not quite blind—it is not, as we have already said, virtue in senile decay—having lost its power of discrimination between good and evil—nor is it holiness in its childhood, which with childish simplicity believes everything that is told it, and that is imposed upon by every pretender. No! it is moral excellence in the maturity of all its faculties—in the possession of all its manly strength. Like the judge upon the bench, it is penetrating, yet not censorious, holding the balance with an even

hand, acting as counsel for the prisoner, rather leaning to the side of the accused than to that of the accuser, and holding him innocent until he is proved to be guilty.

There are some people of a peculiarly suspicious temper, who look with a distrustful eye upon everybody, and upon every action. It would seem as if the world were in a conspiracy against them, and that every one who approached them came with a purpose of mischief. They invert the proper order of things, and instead of imputing a good motive until a bad one is proved, impute a bad one until a good one is made apparent; and so extremely skeptical are they on the subject of moral evidence, that what comes with the force of demonstration to the rest of mankind, in the way of establishing the propriety of an action, scarcely amounts in their view to probability. Those who suspect everybody, are generally to be suspected themselves. Their knowledge of human nature has been obtained at home, and their fears in reference to their neighbors are the reflected images of their own disposition. But without going to this length, we are all too apt to impute evil to others.

1. We are too forward to suspect the piety of our neighbors, and to consider, if not direct hypocrisy, yet ignorance or presumption, as the ground of their profession. Upon some very questionable or imperfect evidence—upon some casual expression, or some doubtful action—we pronounce an individual to be a self-deceiver, or a hypocrite. There is far too much proneness to this in the religious world—too much haste in excising each other from the body of Christ—too much precipitancy in cutting each other off from the shelter of the Christian church. To decide infallibly upon character is not only the prerogative of God—but requires his attributes. There may be some grains of wheat hid among the chaff, which we may be at a loss to discover. We must be careful how we set up 'our views', or 'our experience'—as the test of character, so as to condemn all who do not come up to our standard. It is a fearful thing to unchristianise any one, and it should be done only upon the clearest evidence of his being in an unconverted state. Without being accused of lax or

latitudinarian views, I may observe that we should make great allowance for the force of education—for peculiar habits acquired in circumstances different from our own—and for a phraseology learned among those whose views are but imperfect. To impute to a professor of religion the sin of hypocrisy, and mere formality, and to deny the reality of his religion altogether, is too serious a thing for such short-sighted creatures as we are, except in cases which are absolutely indisputable.

2. We are too prone to impute bad motives in reference to particular actions. Sometimes where the action is good, we ascribe it to some sinister or selfish inducement operating in the mind of him by whom it is performed. This is not infrequently done where we have no contention with the individual, and the imputation is merely the effect of envy; but it is more frequently done in cases where we have personal dislike. When the action is of a doubtful nature, how apt we are to lose sight of all the evidence which may be advanced in favor of its being done from a good motive, and with far less probability decide that the motive is bad.

If we ourselves are the object of the action, we too commonly conclude instantly, and almost against evidence, that a bad motive dictated it. Although the circumstance is at worst equivocal, and admits of a two-fold interpretation, we promptly determine that an insult or an injury was intended, when every one but ourselves clearly discerns that no such design can be fairly imputed. A person passes us in the street without speaking, and we immediately believe that it was an act of intentional insult—forgetting that it is probable he did not see us, or was so immersed in thought as not to recognize us. A general remark is made in conversation, which we suppose, with no other evidence than its applicability to us, was intended to expose us before the company; when, perhaps, the individual who made it had no more reference to us than to a man on the other side of the globe.

A thousand cases might be mentioned, and in which, of two motives that may be imputed, we choose the evil one. If a person has previously injured us, we are peculiarly propensity to this unchristian practice of thinking evil of him. We can scarcely allow ourselves to believe that he can do anything relating to us—but from an improper inducement; we suspect all his words and all his actions—nor is the propensity less strong in those cases in which we have been the aggressors; we then set down everything done by the injured person to the influence of revenge.

The evil of such a disposition is manifest. It is explicitly and frequently prohibited in God's Word.

This is the censoriousness forbidden by our Lord, where he says, "Judge not, that you be not judged," and which is condemned by Paul, where he says, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." James commands us "not to speak evil one of another; for he who speaks evil of his brother, judges his brother." "Evil surmisings" are placed by the apostle among the sins which oppose the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is an invasion of the prerogative of Deity, who alone can search the heart, and read the motives of the bosom. It is injurious to the character of our brethren, and disturbs the peace of society. Half of the broils which arise in the world, and of the schisms which spring up in the church, may be traced to this wicked propensity of "thinking evil," for if men think evil, it is an easy matter to speak evil, and then to do evil—so that the origin of many quarrels will be found in the false impression of a suspicious mind—the misapprehension of a censorious judgment. It is a disposition which our own observation and experience are quite sufficient, if we would be guided by them, to correct. How often, how very often, have we found ourselves mistaken in this matter! How frequently has subsequent evidence shown us our error in imputing a bad motive to an action, which at

the time, to say the worst of it, was only of a doubtful nature! We have discovered that to have originated in accident, which we once thought to have been the result of malevolent design; and we have found other things to have proceeded from ignorance, which we had hastily set down to malice. How many times have we blushed and grieved over our unfounded hasty conclusions—and yet in opposition to our experience and to our resolutions, we still go on to think evil.

But "love thinks no evil," this divine virtue delights to speak well, and think well of others—she talks of their good actions, and says little or nothing, except when necessity compels her, of their bad ones. She holds her judgment in abeyance as to motives, until they are perfectly apparent. She does not look around for evidence to prove an evil design—but hopes that what is doubtful will, by farther light, appear to be correct; she imputes not evil, so long as good is probable; she leans to the side of toleration rather than to that of severity; she makes every allowance that truth will permit; looks at all the circumstances which can be pleaded in mitigation; does not allow her opinions to be formed until she has had opportunity to escape from the mist of passion, and to cool from the wrath of contention. Love desires the happiness of others—and how can she be in haste to think evil of them?

If it be asked, Do all good men act thus? I again reply, They act thus just in proportion as they are under the influence of Christian love. The apostle does not say that every man who is possessed of love does so—but that love itself thinks no evil; and therefore implies that every good man will act thus in the same degree in which he submits to the influence of this virtue. Divine grace! hasten the universal reign on earth, and put an end to those evil surmisings by which the comfort of mankind and the fellowship of the saints are so much disturbed!

The Joy of Love

"Love does not rejoice in iniquity—but rejoices in the truth."

Keeping up the personification of love as presented by the apostle, we may observe that it has its joys and its sorrows; and that its smiles and its tears are the expressions of good will—the tokens of benevolence.

We are first told in what love does NOT take delight in—"Love does not rejoice in INIQUITY."

Sin is, in itself, an evil of enormous magnitude. As committed against a Being whom we are under infinite obligation to love, and serve, and glorify, it must partake of infinite degrees of demerit. It is a violation of that law, which as an emanation from the perfection of God, is itself perfect, and well deserves the eulogy pronounced upon it by the apostle, when he declares it to be "holy, and just, and good." As this is the rule of government to the moral universe, and intended to preserve its order, dependence, and harmony—sin, by opposing its authority, disturbs this order, breaks this dependence, and seeks to introduce the reign of confusion and misery.

None but the infinite mind of God is competent to calculate the mischief which is likely to be produced by a single act of sin—if left to itself without a remedy, or without a punishment. We have only to see what sin has done, to judge of its most evil and hateful nature. All the misery which either is or ever will be on earth, or in hell, is the result of sin. It is the greatest evil—the only evil in the universe. It is the opposite, and the enemy to God; the contrast of all that is pure and glorious in his divine attributes and ineffably beautiful perfections; and as such it is that which he cannot but hate with a perfect hatred. It is not merely the opposite of his nature—but the opponent of his government—the rebel principle that disputes with him for his seat of majesty and the dominion of the universe, saying to him, "Thus far shall you go, and no farther," seeking to cast him down from the throne which he has prepared in the heavens, and to rise with impious usurpation into the holy place of the high and lofty

One. Sin would thus stop the fountain of life and blessedness, by ending the reign of infinite beneficence; and is therefore the enemy of everything that constitutes the felicity of the various orders of rational existence. The happiness of angels and archangels, of cherubim and seraphim, and of the spirits made perfect above, as well as of those who are renewed by the grace of God on earth—arises from holiness—separate from holiness, there can be no happiness for an intellectual being. Now sin is the contrary of holiness, and thus the enemy of happiness. How, then, can love delight in iniquity? If love wills the felicity of rational beings, it must hate that which directly resists and extinguishes it.

And as love cannot delight in SIN in the abstract, so neither can it take pleasure in committing it; for whoever commits it, in so far approves of it—upholds its dominion—extends its reign—diffuses its mischief, and does all he can to recommend it. If his transgression be a common one, he gives the patronage of his example to all of the same kind; and if it be a new one, he becomes an inventor and propagator upon earth of a fresh curse and tormentor. That many do delight in committing iniquity cannot be doubted; they follow it with greediness, and drink it in as the thirsty ox drinks in water. The Scripture speaks of the joys of fools, and of the pleasures of sin. Horrid as is the association between sin and gratification, it certainly exists. Some men have gone so far as to be self-murderers—but who ever took pleasure in the act of destroying themselves? Who ever drank the poison as he would wine, with a merry heart? Who ever dallied in sportive pleasure with the pistol or the dagger, or wound the rope in jocularly round his throat, before he strangled himself with it? Who ever went skipping with a light elastic step to the edge of the precipice, or the brink of a river, from which he was about to plunge into eternity? And yet sinners do all this in reference to their souls. They commit self-murder, the murder of their immortal spirits—to the song of the drunkard, the noise of music, the smile of a harlot, and the laugh of a fool. They sin, and not only so—but delight in iniquity. But "love does not rejoice in iniquity."

Nor can it delight in the sins of OTHERS. It cannot do as fools do, "make a mock of sin." It is most horrid to find pastime and sport in those acts of transgression by which men ruin their souls. Some laugh at the reeling gait, and idiot looks, and maniac gestures—of the drunkard, whom perhaps they have first led on to intoxication, to afford them merriment. Or they are amused by the oaths of the swearer, whose malice and revenge are at work to invent new forms of profanity. Or they are made merry by the mischief with which the persecutors of the righteous often oppose and interrupt the solemnity of worship. Or they attack with raillery and scorn the tender consciences of the saints, and loudly applaud the wit which aims its sharpened arrows against true religion. But love weeps over sin, as that which brings the greatest misery.

"SIN is the greatest and highest infelicity of the creature. Sin depraves the soul within itself, vitiates its powers, deforms its beauties, extinguishes its light, corrupts its purity, darkens its glory, disturbs its tranquility and peace, violates its harmonious joyful state and order, and destroys its very life. Sin alienates the soul from God, severs it from him, engages his justice, and influences his wrath against it. What! to rejoice in sin, that despites the Creator, and has wrought such tragedies in creation! Sin turned angels out of heaven, man out of paradise! Sin has made the blessed God so much a stranger to our world—broken off the communion in so great a part between heaven and earth—obstructed the pleasant commerce which had otherwise probably been between angels and men—so vilely debased the nature of man, and provoked the displeasure of his Maker towards him! Sin once overwhelmed the world with a deluge of water, and will again ruin it by a destructive fire! To rejoice in so hateful a thing as sin, is to do that mad part, to cast about firebrands, arrows, and death, and say, 'Am I not in sport?'—it is to be glad that such a one is turning a man into a devil! a reasonable, immortal soul, capable of heaven, into a fiend of hell!—to be glad that such a soul is tearing itself off from God, is blasting its own eternal hopes, and destroying all its possibilities of a future well-being. Blessed God! how opposite a thing is this to love—the offspring of God! Love is the

birth of heaven, as it is here below, among mortals; the beauty and glory of it, as it is there above, in its natural seat. Love is the eternal bond of living union among the blessed spirits who inhabit there, and which would make our world, did it universally obtain here, another heaven." (Howe "On Love in reference to other Men's Sins.")

No! Sin is the sport of devils! It is not for men who feel the influence of love, to delight in sin. We justly condemn the cruelty of the Romans, in glutting their eyes with the scenes of the amphitheater, where the gladiators were torn in pieces by the fangs of lions and tigers; but theirs was innocent recreation compared with that of the perverted and wicked mind, which can be gratified by seeing an immortal creature ruining and damning his most precious soul! Go, laugh at the agonies of the wretched man tortured upon the rack, and make merry with his distorted features, and strange and hideous cries—go, laugh at the convulsive throes of the epileptic—go to the field of battle, and mock the groans of the wounded and dying—all this is more humane and merciful than delighting in sin! Could we look down upon the burning lake, and see there how the miserable spectres are tossed upon the billows of the burning deep, and hear their dreadful exclamations, "Who can dwell with devouring fire? Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?"—would we then amuse ourselves with sin? Love does thus look upon their misery, so far as her imagination goes, and feels a cold horror and a shivering dread. She mourns over sin wheresoever she sees it, and weeps for those who never weep for themselves. This is her declaration, as she looks around upon the sins of mankind—"Rivers of water run down my eyes, because they keep not your law."

Love cannot delight in the misconduct of an enemy or a rival. This perhaps is the precise meaning of the apostle, in the expression we are now illustrating. Few of us are without some one or more who are considered by us, or who consider themselves, in the character of an opponent or a competitor; and in such cases there is great danger of our being pleased with their moral failures. It is not often that any, except those who are more than ordinarily depraved, will allow

themselves to go so far as to tempt an enemy to sin, in order to gain the advantage over him. Yet there are some who will lay snares for his feet, and watch with eager hope for his halting—and when unable to accomplish this by their own personal exertions, will not scruple to engage accomplices in the work. Weaker and junior agents, who probably may know nothing, or know but little of the purpose for which they are employed, may be drawn by the 'master spirit of mischief' into the confederacy, and be made the instrument of tempting an immortal creature to sin against God, and ruin his own soul. This is the climax of revenge, the highest pitch of wickedness, and the greatest intensity of human malice. It is to extend the mischief of revenge to another world; to call in the aid of devils and the quenchless fire to supply the defects of our ability to inflict misery in proportion to our wishes, and to perpetuate our ill will through eternity. To tempt men to sin against God, with a view to serve ourselves by degrading them before the world—unites much of the malevolence of a devil, with as much of his ingenuity.

But if we cannot go to such a length as to tempt an opponent or a rival to sin, yet if we feel a delight in seeing him fall by other means; if we indulge a secret delight in beholding him rendering himself vile, blasting his reputation, destroying his popularity, and ruining his cause; if we inwardly exclaim, "Ah! so would I have it—now it is all over with him—this is just what I wished and wanted"—then we delight in iniquity. And, oh, how inexpressibly dreadful to be seen with a smiling countenance—or a countenance which, if it relaxes not into a smile, is sufficiently indicative of the joyful state of the heart, to run with eagerness to proclaim the news of that act of another which endangers his salvation—how contrary is all this to the love which delights in happiness!

Perhaps we only go so far as to be pleased that the object of our dislike has been himself injured in a way similar to that in which he has injured us. Although we may not allow ourselves to inflict any direct injury in the way of revenge, nor engage others to do it for us—yet if we see him ill treated by another person, and rejoice; if we

exclaim, "I do not pity him, he has deserved it all for his behavior to me; I am glad he has received what he has deserved; "this is contrary to the law of love—it is a delight in sin.

Nor is the case altered, if our joy be professedly felt on account of the consequences which the sin has brought upon him. We may sometimes attempt to deceive ourselves by the supposition that we do not rejoice in the iniquity that is committed—but only because it has been succeeded by those bitter fruits which the misconduct has merited. We interpret it into a proof that God has taken up the cause of injured innocence, and avenged us of our adversary.

There are many circumstances and situations which more particularly expose us to the violation of this law of love. In the case of two different denominations in religion, or two congregations of the same party in a town, between whom a misunderstanding and schism have been permitted to grow up and to operate, there is imminent danger of this unchristian spirit. Alas! alas! that the bosom of men should be liable to such sentiments! Oh! shame, deep and lasting shame, upon some professing Christians, that such unhallowed emotions should ever be excited in their bosoms! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice; lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph." Let it not be known that the bad passions of the human heart build their nests, like obscene birds, around the altar of the Lord; or, like poisonous weeds, entwine their baneful tendrils around the pillars of his house.

We do not mean to say that any good man can rejoice in the open immorality and vice of an opponent; but are there not many, in all large communities, who, though of Israel in one sense, belong not to it in reality? And where the failure does not proceed to the length of a more awful delinquency—but consists merely of some minor breaches of the law of propriety, are not even the best of men sometimes exposed to the temptation of rejoicing over them, if their cause is promoted by them? The weaker party, especially if they have

been ill-used, treated with pride and scorn, oppression and cruelty, are very apt to take delight in those instances of misconduct by which their opponents have brought upon themselves, the prejudices of the public.

Rival candidates for fame, or power, or influence—whether in ecclesiastical or secular affairs—are liable to the sin of rejoicing in iniquity. Hard, indeed, is it for such hearts as ours to repress all feelings of secret delight in those acts of a competitor by which he sinks—and we are raised in public esteem. That man gives himself credit for more virtue than he really possesses—who finds it easy to rejoice over the follies and miscarriages of the rival who contends with him—or the sins of an enemy who has deeply injured him. Job mentions it as a convincing proof of his integrity, and a striking display of good conduct—that he did not rejoice at his enemy's misfortune, or gloat over the trouble which came to him. (Job 31:29). And it was a fine manifestation of the generosity of David, that instead of rejoicing over those sins which brought on the catastrophe of Saul—which elevated him to the throne of Israel—he bewailed them with as sincere and pungent grief as he could have done had Saul been the kindest of fathers. That we are in danger of the sin we are now considering, is also evident from the exhortation of Solomon—"Rejoice not when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles."

Love, if it had full possession of our hearts, and entire sway, would not only repress all outward exhibitions of this delight—but all inward emotions; would make us dread lest an opponent should fall into sin; would not allow us to see him go unwarned to transgression—but compel us to admonish him of his danger; and would make us cheerfully forego the greatest advantage to our cause or reputation, which we might gain by his misconduct. This is the holiness of love, and the proof of a general hatred for sin; for if we mourn only for our own sins, or the sins of our friends, or of our party—there may be something selfish in our grief after all. But to mourn over iniquity, when though it does harm to another, it may, in some sense,

promote our cause—is indeed to hate sin for its own sake, and for the sake of Him by whom it is condemned.

We go on now to show, what love DOES rejoice in—"Love rejoices in the TRUTH."

By the truth we are not to understand veracity as opposed to falsehood. The apostle is not speaking of this subject. The truth means the doctrine of the Word of God. This is a very common way of describing the revealed will of God in the Scriptures. "Sanctify them by your truth," said our Lord—"your word is truth." The truth itself is the object of delight to love. Truth is the most glorious thing in the universe, next to God and holiness. It has been the great object of mental pursuits since the creation of the world; millions of minds have traveled in quest of it; philosophers profess to be so enamored even with the very term, that they have worshiped it as a mere abstraction, which, after all, they could not understand. What contentions has it originated—to what systems has it given rise—what dogmatism has it been the occasion of! And yet, after all, apart from Scriptural revelation, what is it but a mere name! This gives it reality and form—this tells us where it is, what it is, and how it is to be obtained. Here we learn that the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, and all the doctrines it includes or implies, IS THE TRUTH. The question is answered, proposed by Pilate to the illustrious prisoner at his bar, and the oracle of heaven has declared that the Scriptures are the truth. And the truth is the object of delight to love; the bright star, yes, the full-orbed sun, that enlightens love's eye, and points out the resting place of its heart. And it can rejoice in nothing else. Falsehood, and error, and the devices of the human mind, are the objects of its disgust and abhorrence.

It is evident, then, as we have already shown, that love differs essentially from that vague kind of sentimentalism which is so much cried up at present, both without and within the pale of the church; which scorns to proceed upon the Scripture ground of the truth and its genuine influence; reviling, as narrow-mindedness, and an

uncharitable intolerant spirit, all regard to particular doctrines—but which extends its indiscriminate embrace, and pays its idle and unmeaning compliments to all people, of whatever religious persuasion, presuming that they are all serious and mean well, however much they differ from each other, or from the Scripture, in sentiment or in practice. One of the maxims of this spurious toleration, as we have already considered, is, that there is no moral turpitude in mental error; and that everything is non-essential which does not relate to the interests of morality. How widely this 'counterfeit liberality' differs from the apostolic love, is evident from the fact which we are now considering, and by which we are told that love delights in the truth. For the truth, love will be zealous, as for an object dearer than life itself. For the truth, love will be ready to set the seal of blood, and not resign or betray it through fear of the gloom of the captive's dungeon, or dread of the martyr's stake. Truth is its joy in love's life—its support in death. Truth is the dear companion of love's pilgrimage on earth, and its eternal associate in the felicities of heaven.

But as the truth is here opposed to iniquity—the apostle especially intended to state that HOLINESS is the object of delight to love. Holiness is the natural and appropriate effect of the truth believed. No man can receive the truth—in the love of it—without bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory of God. It is the delight of this pure and heavenly grace of love, to contemplate holiness wherever it is to be found. Ascending to the celestial world, it joins the choirs of the cherubim, to look upon the spotless One, and with them to give utterance to its ecstasies, in the short but sublime anthem, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty!" Undismayed by the roar of thunder, and the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words; by the thick darkness, and the vivid lightnings, and the agitation of the quaking earth—love ventures near the base of Sinai, and, for the delight that it has in holiness, rejoices in the LAW which is the rule of righteousness. The ANGELS are pleasant to behold, because they are clad in garments of unsullied purity.

The crown of glory which Adam wore before his fall was his innocence; and the deep degradation into which he fell by his apostasy, was loss of holiness, in which consisted the image of God. The ceremonial LAW has an excellence in the eye of love, because it teaches the value of holiness in the view of God, and the necessity of it for man. The PROPHETIC VISIONS are all delighted in, because they are distinguished by the beauties of holiness; and the whole GOSPEL of Jesus is dear to the heart of love, because it is intended to purify unto Christ a church—which he will present to the Father, without spot, wrinkle, or blemish. MEN are esteemed and loved on earth, as they have this moral excellence of holiness, enstamped upon their souls; and in looking for a HEAVEN which shall satisfy all its desires, it can think of nothing higher and better, than a state of sinless purity!

So ardent and so uniform is love's regard to holiness, that it rejoices in it when it is found—even in an enemy or a rival. Yes; if we are under the influence of this divine virtue of love—as we ought to be, we shall desire, and desire very fervently too, that those who have displeased or injured us—may be better than they are. We shall wish to see every 'speck of imperfection' gone from their conduct, and their whole character standing out to the admiration of the world, and receiving the approbation of those by whom they are now condemned. We shall be willing to do anything by which they may conciliate to themselves the favor of the alienated multitude; and also raise themselves to the vantage ground on which their misconduct has placed us above them. This is love—to rejoice in those moral excellences, and gaze upon them with gratitude and delight, which invest the character of one that opposes us with loveliness and beauty—and by which his cause is promoted, in some degree to the detriment of ours.

Men of little virtue may sometimes join from social policy—in those commendations of another's goodness, the justice of which they cannot dispute, and the harmony of which they cannot disturb. But it is only the Christian, who is far advanced in the practice of all that is

difficult in religion—who can secretly rejoice, without envy or jealousy, in those very virtues which draw away the public attention from himself—and cause him to pass into eclipse and to sink into shadow.

"O LOVE! this is your work, and this your glory—a work too rarely performed—a glory too rarely seen—in this region of selfishness, in this world of imperfection; where, of the multitudes who profess to submit to your sway—there are still so few who are really governed by your laws, and inspired by your influence!"

The Toleration of Love

"Love bears all things."

"Love believes all things."

"Love hopes all things."

1. "Love BEARS all things."

Some writers consider this seventh verse as an amplification of the foregoing one, and explain it, in reference to the truth, in the following manner— "Love bears all things," reported in the truths of Scripture—however opposed to the corruption of human nature, and counts none of them hard sayings or unfit to be borne. "Love believes all things" imported in the truths of Scripture—or all the inferences which the apostles have deduced from it—as being well attached to the source from whence it flows. "Love hopes for all things" promised in the truths of Scripture. "Love endures all things," or patiently suffers all the afflictions that can attend a steady attachment to truths of Scripture. This gives a very good sense of the words, and admits the full force of these universal expressions. Yet it certainly

agrees better with the scope of the apostle to understand the verse with reference to the brethren as the objects of this love.

If we render the first expression, "Love bears all things"—as our translators have done, it may signify our bearing one another's burdens and weaknesses, which is to fulfill the law of Christ—and it must be confessed this is strictly true; for whoever is under the influence of the principle of love, will possess a spirit of tender sympathy. In this world we all groan, being burdened. Each has his own load of care, or grief, or imperfection. This world is not the state where we find perfect rest. How wide is the scope, how frequent the opportunity, how numerous the occasions, for the 'sympathy of love'! And who that is possessed of benevolence, can allow himself to pass a brother upon the road, laboring under a heavier burden than his own, without offering to bear a part?

We are not to be audaciously intrusive and intermeddling, nor to pry into the secrets of our neighbors with an inquisitive curiosity; but to inquire into the cause which gives them so much concern or so much grief—is the duty of those who are the witnesses of their careworn countenance and downcast look. What an unfeeling heart must that man have, who can see a very sorrowful person before him, and never kindly ask the reason of its existence! It is but little that sympathy can do for the sufferer—but that little should be most cheerfully afforded. To be unnoticed and unpitied in our griefs, adds greatly to their weight.

For what purpose are Christians collected into churches? not merely to eat the Lord's Supper together—this could be done without any such distinct recognition of a mutual relationship, as that which takes place in the fellowship of believers. The end and design of this bond is, that being united as one body, the members might cherish a general sympathy for each other, and exercise their benevolence in the way of mutual assistance. The rich, by their munificence, should help their poorer brethren to bear the burden of poverty; the strong should aid the weak to bear the burden of their fears and

apprehensions; those who are in health and ease should, by seasonable visits, and soothing words, and kind offices, bear the burden of the sick; counsel should always be given, when it is sought by those who are in difficulty; and a disposition should pervade the whole body, to render its varied resources, talents, and energies, available for the benefit of the whole.

But though this also gives a beautiful meaning, and enjoins a necessary duty, it is not the right view of the passage. The word translated "bears" all things, signifies also, "to contain, to conceal, to cover." The idea of "bearing," is parallel in meaning to that of "enduring," of which the apostle speaks in the latter part of the verse; and it is not probable that it was his intention to express the same thought twice. Adopting the idea of "concealment" as the sentiment he intended to express, and the "failings of others" as the object to which it refers, I shall go on to show in what way it is practiced.

To do this with still greater effect, we shall exhibit a general view of those sins to which this view of Christian love stands exposed; and these are—slander, detraction, and rash judging, or censoriousness.

Perhaps there are no sins which are more frequently alluded to, or more severely rebuked, in Scripture, than those of the TONGUE; and for this reason—because there are none to which we are so frequently tempted—none we are so prone to indulge, or so bold to excuse—none which are so productive of disorder and discomfort to society. Besides swearing, falsehood, obscenity, and blasphemy—the Scripture speaks of bearing false witness, railing, talebearing, whispering, backbiting, slander, and reproach—a dismal enumeration of vices belonging to that member which was intended to be the glory of our bodily frame.

By SLANDER, we understand the circulation of a false report with the intention of injuring a neighbor's reputation. Its most vicious excess is the invention and construction of a story which is absolutely false from beginning to end. Its next lower grade, though little

inferior in criminality, is to become the extender of the tale, knowing it to be false. "This," says Barrow, "is to become the hucksters of counterfeit wares, or partners in this vile trade. There is no coiner who has not emissaries and accomplices ready to take from his hand and pass on his money; and such 'second hand slanderers' are scarcely less guilty than the first authors. He who brews lies may have more wit and skill—but the 'spreader of the slander' shows similar malice and wickedness. In this there is no great difference between the vile devil who frames scandalous reports—and the little imps who run about and disperse them."

The next operation of slander, is to receive and spread, without examining into the truth of them, false and injurious reports. It is a part of a good man's character, that "He takes not up a reproach against his neighbor," that is, he does not easily entertain it, much less propagate it; he does not receive it but upon the most convincing evidence. But slander founds reproachful tales upon 'mere conjecture or suspicion'—and raises an injurious representation upon a mere assumption. Sometimes it withers the reputation of a neighbor by rash speaking, or vehemently affirming things which it has no reason to believe, and no motive for affirming—except for the hope of exciting ill-will towards the one slandered.

Slander is sinful, because forbidden in every part of Scripture. Slander is cruel, because it is robbing our neighbor of that which is dearer to him than life. Slander is foolish, because it subjects the calumniator himself to all kinds of trouble—for it not only exposes him to the wrath of God, the loss of his soul, and the miseries of hell in the world to come—but it makes him odious in the present life, causes him to be shunned and discredited, arms his conscience against his own peace, brings upon himself the most reproachful accusations, and not infrequently the vengeance of that public justice, which is rightly appointed to be the guardian not only of property and life—but of reputation also.

DETRACTION, or backbiting, differs a little from slander, though in its general nature and constitution it closely resembles it. Slander involves an imputation of falsehood—but detraction may clothe itself with truth! Backbiting is sweetened poison—served from a golden cup—by the hand of hypocrisy. A detractor's aim is the same as the slanderer's—to injure the reputation of another—but he avails himself of means that are a little different. He represents people and their actions under the most disadvantageous circumstances he can—setting forth those which may make them 'appear' guilty or ridiculous—while ignoring the commendable qualities and actions of those it backbites. "When he cannot deny the metal to be good, and the stamp to be true, he clips it, and so rejects it from being current—he misconstrues doubtful actions unfavorably, and throws over the very 'virtues' of his neighbors, the name of 'faults'—calling the sober sour, the conscientious morose, the devout superstitious, the frugal sordid, the cheerful frivolous, and the reserved crafty! He diminishes from the excellence of good actions, by showing how much better they might have been done; and attempts to destroy all confidence in long established character, and all respect for it—by focusing on some single act of imprudence, and expanding it into a magnitude—thus painting the whole character with darkness—which truth and justice forbid. Such is the backbiter—whose crime is compounded with the ingredients of—vileness, pride, selfishness, envy, malice, falsehood, cowardice, and folly."

Backbiting must be peculiarly hateful to God—"He is the God of truth, and therefore detests lying, of which detraction ever has a spice. He is the God of justice, and therefore does especially abhor wronging the best people and actions. He is the God of love, and therefore cannot but loathe this primary violation of love. He is jealous of his glory, and therefore cannot endure it to be abused, by slurring his good gifts and graces. He cannot but hate the offense which approaches to that most heinous and unpardonable sin, which consists in defaming the excellent works performed by Divine power and goodness—and ascribing them to bad causes."

The same writer, in speaking of the mischief of detraction, as discouraging others from the performance of that goodness which is thus vilified and defamed, has the following beautiful remarks. "Many, seeing the best men thus disparaged, and the best actions vilified, are disheartened and deterred from practicing virtue, especially in a conspicuous and eminent degree—'Why,' will many a man say, 'shall I be strictly good, seeing goodness is so liable to be misused? Had I not better be contented with a mediocrity and obscurity of goodness, than by a glaring luster thereof to draw the envious eye, and kindle raging ridicule upon me?' And when the honor of virtue is blasted in its practices, many will be diverted from it. So will virtue grow out of fashion—and the world be corrupted by these agents of the EVIL ONE. It were advisable, upon this consideration, not to seem ever to detract, even not then when we are assured, that by speaking evil—we shall not really do it. If we should discover any man who was reputed to be worthy; whom we discover, by standing in a nearer light, not to be truly such—yet wisdom would commonly dictate, and goodness dispose, not to mar his reputation. If we should observe, without danger of mistake, any beneficent action to be performed out of bad motives, principles, or designs; yet ordinarily, in discretion and honesty, we should let it pass with such condemnation as its appearance may procure, rather than slur it by venting our negative apprehensions about it; for it is no great harm that any man should enjoy undeserved commendation. Our granting its claims is but being over-just, which if it ever be a fault, can hardly be so in this case—wherein we do not personally expend any cost or suffer any damage. But it may do mischief to blemish any appearance of virtue. It may be a wrong thereto, to deface its very image—the very disclosing of hypocrisy does inflict a wound on goodness, and exposes it to scandal, for bad men will then be prone to infer that all virtue does proceed from the like bad principles; so the disgrace cast on that which is spurious, will redound to the prejudice of that which is most genuine. And if it is good to forbear detracting from that which is certainly false, much more so in regard to that which is possibly true; and far more still is it so in respect to that which is clear and sure."

CENSORIOUSNESS is another sin of the same class—another child of the same family—varying, however, from those we have already considered by acting not so much in the way of 'reporting' faults as in 'condemning' them too severely. It is different from slander, inasmuch as it assumes that what it condemns is true; and from detraction, inasmuch as it is not exercised with an intention to injure another in public estimation—but only to reprove him for what is wrong. It assumes the character, not of a witness—but of a judge—hence the injunction, "Judge not."

Censoriousness, then, means a disposition to scrutinize men's motives—to pass sentence upon their conduct—to reproach their faults—accompanied by an unwillingness to make all reasonable allowances for their mistakes, and a tendency to the side of severity, rather than to that of leniency. We are not to suppose that all inspection and condemnation of the conduct of others is sin; nor that all reproof of offenders is a violation of the law of love; nor imagine that we are to think well of our neighbors—in opposition to the plainest evidence; nor that we are to entertain such a credulous opinion of the excellence of mankind, as unsuspectingly to confide in every man's claims. But what is wrong in this particular of censoriousness—is needlessly inquiring into the conduct and motives of other men; examining and arraigning them at our personal bar of judgement, when we stand in no relation to them that requires such a scrutiny; delivering our opinion when it is not called for; pronouncing sentence with undue severity; and heaping the heaviest degree of reproach upon an offender which we can find language to express.

"The world has become so extremely critical and censorious that in many places the chief employment of men, and the main body of conversation is, if we mark it, taken up in judging; every company is a court of justice, every seat becomes a tribunal, at every table stands a bar, whereunto all men are cited—whereat every man is arraigned and sentenced. Where no sublimity or sacredness of dignity—no integrity or innocence of life—no prudence or circumspection of

demeanor—can exempt any person from it. Not one escapes being taxed under some odious name, or scandalous character or other. Not only the outward actions and visible practices of men are judged—but their secret sentiments are brought under review—their inward dispositions have a verdict passed upon them—and their final states are determined.

Whole bodies of men are thus judged at once! And it is easy in one breath—to damn whole churches—at one push to throw down whole nations into the bottomless pit! Yes, God himself is hardly spared, his providence coming under the bold ridicule of those who—as the Psalmist speaks of some in his time, whose race does yet survive —"speak loftily, and set their mouth against the heavens."

Barrow, in order to denounce this censoriousness temper, gives the following QUALIFICATIONS OF A JUDGE. He should be appointed by competent authority, and not intrude himself into office. To how many censors may we say, "Who made you a judge?" He should be free from all prejudice and partiality. Is this the case with the censorious? He should never proceed to judgment, without a careful examination of the case, so as well to understand it. Let the private self-appointed judges remember this, and act upon the principle of Solomon—"He who answers a matter before he hears it—it is a folly and a shame to him."

He should never pronounce sentence but upon good grounds—after certain proof and full conviction. If this rule were observed, how many censures would be prevented. He will not meddle with causes beyond the jurisdiction of his court. If this were recollected and acted upon, the voice of unlawful censure would die away in silence! For who are we, that we should try the hearts and search the thoughts of men, or judge another's servant? He never proceeds against any man, without citing him to appear, either in person or by his representative, and giving him an opportunity to defend himself.

When anyone is censured in company, there should always be found some generous mind, who would propose that the accused should be sent for—and the trial put off until he appeared. He must pronounce, not according to private imagination—but to public and established laws. Is this the rule of the censorious? Is it not rather their custom to make their own private opinion the law? He should be a person of great knowledge and ability. What is the usual character of the private censors of human conduct? Are they not people of great ignorance and few ideas, who, for lack of something else to say, or ability to say it, talk of their neighbors' faults—a topic on which a child, or a fool, can be fluent?

He is not an accuser; and moreover is, by virtue of his office, counsel for the accused. On the contrary, the censorious are generally not only judges but accusers, and counsel against the culprits whom they have brought to the bar. He should lean, as far as the public good will allow, to the side of mercy. But mercy has no place in the bosom of the censorious, and their very justice is cruelty and oppression. He must himself be innocent. Why is there not a voice heard in every company, when the prisoner is arraigned, and the process of judgment begins, saying, "He who is without sin, let him cast the first stone?" He proceeds with solemnity, and grief, and slowness, to pass the sentence. But what indecent haste and levity, not excepting joy, do we witness in those who are given to the practice of censuring their neighbors' conduct.

Now, to all these sinful practices, Christian love stands directly opposed. It is a long time before Christian love allows itself to perceive the faults of others. Not more quick is instinct in the bird, or beast, or fish of prey, to discover its victim, than the detractor and the censorious are to observe imperfections as soon as they appear in the conduct of those around them. Their vision is quite telescopic, to see objects of this kind at a distance! And they have a microscopic power of inspection, to examine those that are small and near—and, when looking at faults, they always employ the highest magnifying power which their instrument admits of. They are always looking at

those 'small defects' which to the naked eye, would be lost amid the surrounding virtue. They do not want to see virtues—No! All that is virtuous, and good, and lovely—is passed over in quest of deformity and evil.

But all this is utterly abhorrent to the nature of love, which, intent upon the well-being of mankind, and anxious for their happiness—is ever looking to notice the virtues of others. The eye of the Christian philanthropist is so busily employed in searching for excellence, and so fixed and so ravished by it when it is found, that it is sure to pass over many things of a contrary nature, as not included in the object of its inquiry—just as he who is searching for gems is likely to pass by many common stones unheeded; or as he who is looking for a particular star or constellation in the heavens, is not likely to see the candles which are near him upon earth. Good men are his delight; and to find these, very many of the evil generation are passed by. And there is also a singular power of abstraction in his benevolence, to separate, when looking at a mixed character, the good from the evil, and, losing sight of the evil, to concentrate its observation in the good.

And when Christian love is obliged to admit the existence of imperfections, it diminishes as much as possible their magnitude, and hides them as much as is lawful from its own notice. It takes no delight in looking at them, finds no pleasure in keeping them before its attention, and poring into them; but turns away from them as an unpleasant object, as a delicate sense would from whatever is offensive. If we find an affinity between our thoughts and the sins of which we are the spectators, it is a plain proof that our benevolence is of a very doubtful nature, or in a feeble state. On the contrary, if we involuntarily turn away our eyes from beholding evil, and are conscious to ourselves of a strong revulsion, and an acute distress, when we cannot altogether retire from the view of it, we possess an evidence that we know much of that virtue which covers all things. If we are properly, as we ought to be, under the influence of Christian love—we shall make all reasonable allowances for those things which

are wrong in the conduct of our neighbor; we shall, as we have already considered, not be forward to suspect evil; but shall do everything to lessen the heinousness of the action. This is what is meant, when it is said that "Love covers a multitude of sins." "Hatred stirs up strifes—but love covers all sins."

It is the wish and the act of love to conceal from the public all the faults which the good of the offender, and the ends of public justice, do not require to be disclosed. There are cases, in which to conceal offenses, whatever kindness it may be to one, would be unkindness to many. If a person living in sin, has so far imposed upon a minister, as to induce him to propose him for admission to the fellowship of the church, it is the bounden duty of any individual who knows the real character of the candidate, to make it known to the pastor; and the same disclosure should be made in reference to a person already in communion, who is actually living in sin—concealment in these cases is an injury to the whole body of Christians. If a person is likely to be injured in his temporal concerns by reposing confidence in one who is utterly unworthy of it, it is the duty of those who are acquainted with the snare to warn the destined victim of his danger. If any are so far regardless of the peace of society and the laws of the country, as to be engaged in great crimes against both, concealment on the part of those who are aware of the existence of such practices, is a participation in the crime. As our love is to be universal, as well as particular—it must never be exercised towards individuals in a way that is really opposed to the interests of the community.

But where no other interest is concerned—where no claims demand a disclosure—where no injury is done by concealment, and no benefit is conferred by giving publicity to a fault—there our duty is to cover it over with the veil of secrecy—and maintain an unbroken silence upon the subject.

Instead of this friendly and amiable reserve, how different is the way in which many act! No sooner have they heard of the commission of a fault, than they set off with the spicy news—as glad as if they bore

the tidings of a victory—proclaiming the melancholy fact with strange delight in every company, and almost to every individual they meet. And as there is a greedy appetite in some people for scandal, they find many ears as open to listen to the tale, as their lips are to tell it. Or perhaps they relate the matter as a 'secret', extorting a promise from those to whom they communicate it that they will never mention it again. But if it be not proper to publish it to the world, why do they speak of it at all? If it be proper for publicity, why lock it up in silence? Sometimes the act of telling faults in secret is a pitiable kind of weakness, an utter impossibility of keeping anything in the mind, accompanied by an intention of publishing it only to a single person; but in other people it is a wish to have the gratification of being the first to communicate the report to a large number; each is made to promise that he will not disclose it, that the original reporter may not be anticipated as he pursues his round, and thus have his delight diminished, in being every where the first to tell the bad news.

Then there are some, who publish the faults of others under the hypocritical pretense of lamenting over them—and producing in others a caution against the same thing. You will see them in company putting on a grave countenance, and hear them asking the person who sits near them—but with a voice loud enough to reach every corner of the room, whether he has heard the report of Mr. Such-a-one's conduct; and when every ear is caught, every tongue silent, and every eye fixed, he will proceed in a strain of deep lamentation, and tender commiseration—to bewail the misconduct of the delinquent, seasoning the narration of the offense, as he goes through all its circumstances and all its aggravations—with many expressions of pity for the offender, and many words of caution to the company. Thus, under the hypocritical guise of pity and the abhorrence of sin—he has indulged in this mischievous yet too common propensity—to publish the failings of some erring brother. Has he mentioned the subject to the individual himself? probably not. And he has withheld this mode of expressing his pity, what avails his public commiseration? What possible sympathy with the

offender can it be—to placard him in public, and blazon his faults in company?

Some there are, who suppose that there is little harm in talking, in their own particular circles, of the failings of their neighbors—they would not speak of these things before strangers, or society in general; but they feel no scruple in making them matter of conversation among their select friends. But these friends may not all be prudent—and if it be desirable that the fact should not be known outside the circle, the best way is, that it be not known within it. Where there is no benefit likely to be obtained by publicity, it is best, in reference to character, to lock up the secret in our own mind, and literally to observe the injunction of the prophet—"Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend. Even with her who lies in your embrace be careful of your words." Micah 7:5.

Love not only will not originate—but will not help to circulate an evil report. When the tale comes to her, there, at least in that direction, it stops. There are gossips, who, though they would shudder at slander, and, perhaps, would not be the first to give publicity to an idle report of another, yet feel no scruple in telling what many already know. "It is no secret," they say, "else I would not mention it." But we should not do even this—we should neither invent, nor originate, nor propagate an evil report. While every tongue is voluble in spreading bad tidings, 'love' will be silent; while all seem anxious to enjoy communion in backbiting and censoriousness, and to sip the cup of detraction as it passes around the company, 'love' says to the person who has told the story, "I have no ears for defamation, or even for the tale of another's faults. Go, and affectionately speak with the individual of his failings—but do not talk of them in public." If all men acted on these principles, slander would die upon the lips which gave it birth; talebearers would cease for lack of customers, to carry on their trade as 'peddlers in detraction'; backbiting would go out of fashion; and the love of scandal be starved for the lack of food.

The evils then to which Christian love is opposed, are—

Calumny, which invents a slanderous report to injure the reputation of another.

Detraction, which magnifies a fault.

Censoriousness, which is too meddling and too rigid in condemning a fault.

Tale-bearing, which propagates a fault.

Curiosity, which desires to know a fault.

Malignity, which takes delight in a fault.

Of this list of vices; calumny is of course the worst; but a 'tattling disposition', though it may have little of the malignity of slander, is a servant to do its work, and a tool to perpetrate its mischief. People of this description are far too numerous! They are to be found in every town, in every village, yes, and in every church! They are not the authors of libels—but they are the publishers; they do not draw up the placard—but only paste it up in all parts of the town; and are responsible, not for the malice which invented the defamatory lie—but for the damage of circulating it. Their minds are a kind of common sewer, into which all the filthy streams of scandal are perpetually flowing; a receptacle for whatever is offensive and noxious! Such gossips might be pitied for their weakness, if they were not still more to be dreaded for the damage they do. They are not malignants—but they are mischief makers; and, as such, should be shunned and dreaded. Every door should be closed against them, or at least, every ear. They should be made to feel that, if silence be a penance to them, their idle and injurious tales are a much more afflictive penance to their neighbors.

Now, such people would not only be rendered more safe—but more dignified by 'love'—this heavenly virtue, by destroying their propensity to gossiping, would rescue them from reproach, and confer upon them an elevation of character to which they were

strangers before. It would turn their activity into a new channel, and make them as anxious to promote the peace of society, as they were before to disturb it by the din of their idle and talkative tongue. They would perceive that no man's happiness can be promoted by the publication of his faults; for if he is penitent, to have his failings made the butt of ridicule, is like pouring vinegar upon the deep wounds of a troubled mind; or if he is not penitent, this exposure will do harm, by producing irritation, and by thus placing him farther off from true contrition.

If it is essential to Christian love, to feel a disposition to cover the faults which we witness, and to treat with tenderness and delicacy the offender, it is quite distressing to consider how little Christian love there is in the world. How much need have we to labor for an increase of it ourselves, and to diffuse it both by our influence and example, that the harmony of society may not be so frequently interrupted by the lies of the slanderer; the exaggerations of the detractor; the harsh judgments of the censorious; or the idle gossip of the tale-bearer.

2. "Love BELIEVES all things."

Nearly allied to the property we have just considered, and an essential part of toleration, is that which follows—"Love believes all things"—that is, not all things contained in the Word of God—for faith in divine testimony is not here the subject treated of. But love believes all things which are testified concerning our brethren—not, however, such as are testified to their disadvantage—but in their favor. This property or operation of love is so involved, and has been to such an extent illustrated, in what we have already considered, that it cannot be necessary to enlarge upon the subject again. As love regards with benevolent desire the well-being of all, it must feel naturally disposed to believe whatever can be stated in their favor.

Tell a fond mother of the faults of her child; does she immediately and entirely believe the testimony? No! You will perceive an aspect of

unbelief on her countenance—you will hear inquiries and doubtful insinuations from her lips—and after the clearest evidence has been adduced in support of the testimony, you will still discern that she doubts you. But, on the contrary, carry to her a report of her child's good conduct—tell her of his achievements in wisdom or in virtue, and you see at once the look of assent, the smile of approbation, hear the language of sureness, and in some cases witness a degree of confidence which amounts to weakness. How can we account for this? On the principle of the apostle, that "love believes all things." The mother loves her child; she is sincerely anxious for his well-being; and as our wishes have an influence upon our convictions, she is forward to believe what is said to her child's honor, and as backward to believe what is said to his discredit.

Here, then, is one of the brightest displays of love, as exhibited in the man who believes all things which are related to the advantage of others. He hears the report with sincere pleasure, listens with the smile of approbation, the nod of assent; he does not try to find ground and reason for discrediting the fact, nor does he search with inquisitive eye for some flaw in the evidence, to impeach the veracity of the testimony; he does not cautiously hold his judgment in abeyance, as if afraid of believing too well of his neighbor; but if the evidence amounts to probability, he is ready to believe the account, and delights to find another instance of human excellence, by which he may be more reconciled and attached to mankind, and by which he discovers that there is more goodness and happiness on earth, than he knew of before.

The strongest proof and power of love—in this mode of its operation—is its disposition to believe all good reports of an enemy or a rival. Many people can believe nothing good—but everything bad, of those whom they consider as their enemies or a rivals. Let them have once conceived a prejudice of dislike—let them only have been injured or offended, opposed or humbled, by anyone—and from that moment their ears are closed against every word to his credit, and open to every tale that may tend to his disgrace. Prejudice has neither eyes

nor ears for good; but is all eye and ear for evil. Its influence on the judgment is immense—its bewildering operations upon our convictions is really most surprising and frightful. In many cases, it disbelieves evidence as bright, clear, and steady as the meridian splendor of the sun—to follow that which is dim and delusive as the feeble candle-light. How tremblingly anxious should we be to keep the mind free from the misleading influence of prejudice! How careful to obtain that candid, impartial, discriminating judgment, which can distinguish between things that differ, and approve of things that are excellent—even in reference to people that are in some respects opposed to us! This is Christian toleration; and a more important disposition of the kind we can scarcely imagine.

Through that great law of our nature, which we call the association of ideas, we are too apt, when we have discovered one thing wrong in the character or conduct of another—to unite it with nothing but wrong, and that continually. We scarcely ever think of him or repeat his name—but under the malign influence of this unhappy association. What we need is more of the power of objectivity, by which we can separate 'the occasional act' from 'the permanent character'—the bad qualities from the good ones—and still be left at liberty to believe what is good, notwithstanding what we know of the bad.

If, in accordance with the principles of Scriptural revelation, with the testimony of our senses, and the evidence of experience, we believe that in God's sight, there is none so perfect as to be destitute of all flaws; we should at the same time believe that, so far as mere general excellence goes, there are few so bad as to be destitute of all approvable traits. It is the business of Christian love to examine, to report, to believe with impartiality—and toleration is one of the operations of love. This heavenly disposition forbids the prejudice which is generated by differences on the subject of religion, and enables its possessor to discredit the evil, and to believe the favorable testimony which is borne to those of other denominations, and of other congregations. All excellence belongs not to our church or

denomination; all evil is not to be found in other churches or denominations! Yet how prepared are many people to believe nothing good, or everything bad, of other churches or denominations. Away, away, with this detestable spirit! cast it out of the church of the living God! Like the demon spirit which possessed the man who dwelt among the tombs, and made him a torment to himself, and a terror to others—this 'demon of prejudice' has too long possessed, and torn, and infuriated, even the body of the church.

"Spirit of love! descend and expel the infernal usurper. Cast out this spoiler of our beauty; this disturber of our peace; this opponent of our communion; this destroyer of our honor. Before your powerful, yet gentle sway, let prejudice retire and prepare us to believe all things that are reported to us to the credit of others—be they of our group or not—whether they have offended us or not—and whether in past times they have done evil or good."

3. "Love HOPES all things."

Hope has the same reference here, as the faith just considered; it relates not to what God has promised in his word, to those who love him. But love hopes to the good, of that which is reported to exist in our neighbors. In a report of a doubtful matter, where the evidence is apparently against an individual, love will still hope that something may yet turn up to his advantage—that some light will yet be thrown on the darker features of the case, which will set the matter in a more favorable point of view. Love will not give full credit to present appearances, however indicative they may seem to be of evil—but will hope, even against hope, for the best.

If the action itself cannot be defended, then love will hope that the motive was not bad—that the intention in the mind of the actor was not so evil as the deed appeared to the eye of the spectator—that ignorance, not malice, was the cause of the transaction—and that the time will come when this will be apparent.

Love does not speedily abandon an offender in despondency. Love does not immediately give him up as incorrigible, nor soon cease to employ the means necessary for his reformation; but is willing to expect that he may yet repent and improve, however discouraging present appearances may be. Hope is the main-spring of exertion; and as love means a desire for the well-being of others, it will not soon let go of that hope, in the absence of which all its efforts must be paralyzed.

There are reasons which make it wise, as well as kind—to believe and hope all things for the best. Presumptive evidence, however strong—is often fallacious. Many circumstances in the case may look very suspicious; and yet the after-discovery of some little event may alter the aspect of the whole affair, and make the innocence of the accused far more apparent than even his guilt seemed before. The various instances in which we have ourselves been deceived by appearances, and have been led by defective evidence, though at the same time, convincing evidence, should certainly teach us caution in listening to evil reports, and dispose us to believe and hope all things.

When we consider, also, how common is slander, detraction, and tale-bearing, we should not be hasty in forming an opinion; nor should we forget the concern which is often manifested by each party engaged in a contention to gain our alliance to their cause—by being first to report the matter, and to produce an impression favorable to themselves. Solomon has given us a proverb, the truth of which we have seen proved in a thousand instances, and which, notwithstanding, we are continually forgetting—"The first to present his case seems right, until another comes forward and questions him." Proverbs 18:17

It is a proof of great weakness, so to give our ear to the first reporter, as to close it against the other party—and yet we are all prone to do this! A plausible tale produces an impression, which no subsequent opposing testimony, though attended with far clearer evidence of truth than the first statement, can effectually obliterate. We know

that every case has two sides—we have all been experimentally acquainted with the folly of deciding until we have heard both sides; and yet, in opposition to our reason and to our experience, we are apt to take up a prejudice from a one-sided or partisan point of view.

Another circumstance, by which we are in danger of being misled in our opinion of our neighbor's conduct, is the mischievous propensity of many people to exaggerate everything they relate. Whatever be the philosophical cause into which a 'fondness for the marvelous', and a 'delight in exciting surprise', may be resolved—its existence and its prevalence are unquestionable. Perhaps we all like to relate what is new, and strange, and interesting; not excepting even bad news. To such a pitch is this carried, by those who are deeply infected with the propensity to exaggerate, that they never tell anything as they heard it—every fact is embellished or magnified. If a neighbor has displayed a little anger, they saw him 'raging like a fury!' If he was a little cheerful after dinner, he was 'perhaps drunk!' If he was evasive, they protest that he committed falsehood, if not perjury. If he had not been so generous in his transactions as could be wished, he was an extortioner, and devoid of common honesty.

Nothing is moderate and sober in the hands of such people; everything is extravagant or extraordinary! All they meet with is in the form of adventure. Out of the least incident they can construct a tale; and on a small basis of truth, raise a mighty superstructure of fiction—to interest and impress every company into which they come! Undeterred by the presence of the individual from whom they received the original fact, they will not scruple to go on magnifying and embellishing, until the author of the statement can scarcely recognize his own narrative. How strange it seems, that such people should either not know, or not remember, that all this while they are telling falsehoods! They do not seem to understand, that if we relate a circumstance in such a manner as is calculated to give an impression which, either in nature or degree, does not accord with reality—we are guilty of the sin of lying. Where another person's character is concerned, the sin is still greater, since it adds slander to

falsehood. Many a man's reputation has been frittered away by this wicked and mischievous propensity. Every narrator of an instance of misconduct, an instance not, perhaps, heinous in the first instance, has added something to the original fact, until the offense has stood before the public eye, so blackened by this 'accumulated defamation', that for a while he has lost his character, and only partially recovered it in the end, and this with extreme difficulty.

Remembering the existence of such an evil, we should be backward to take up an unfavorable opinion upon first appearance; and where we cannot believe all things, be willing to HOPE. Such is the dictate of love—and such the conduct of those who yield their hearts to its influence.

"Love bears all things."

"Love believes all things."

"Love hopes all things."

The Self-Denial of Love

"Love endures all things."

Christian love is not fickle, unsteady, or easily discouraged. Love is not soon disheartened, or induced to relinquish its object. Love is persevering, patient, and self-denying in the pursuance of its design to relieve the needs, assuage the sorrows, reform the vices, and allay the animosities—of those whose good it seeks. Love is as patient in bearing—as it is active in doing. Christian love unites the uncomplaining submission of the lamb, the plodding perseverance of the ox, with the courage of the lion!

Christian love is no frivolous and capricious affection, relinquishing its object from a mere love of change. Nor is love a feeble virtue, which weakly lets go its purpose in the prospect of difficulty. Nor is love a cowardly grace, which drops its scheme, and flees from the face of danger. No, Christian love is the union of benevolence with strength, patience, courage, and perseverance. It has feminine beauty—gentleness, and sweetness—united with masculine energy, and power, and heroism. To do good, it will meekly bear with the infirmities of the lowest, or will brave the scorn and fury of the mightiest. But let us survey the opposition, the difficulties, the discouragements, the provocations—which Christian love has to bear—and which, with enduring patience, it can resist.

Sacrifices of ease, of time, of feeling, and of property, must all be endured—for it is impossible to exercise Christian love without making these. He who would do good to others without practicing self-denial, does but dream. The way of philanthropy is ever up hill, and not infrequently over rugged rocks, and through thorny paths. If we would promote the happiness of our fellow-creatures, it must be by parting with something or other that is dear to us. If we would lay aside revenge when they have injured us, and exercise forgiveness,

we must often mortify our own feelings. If we would reconcile the differences of those who are at variance, we must give up our time, and sometimes our comfort. If we would assuage their griefs, we must expend our property. If we would reform their wickedness, we must part with our ease. If we would, in short, do good of any kind, we must be willing to deny ourselves, and bear labor of body and pain of mind. And love is willing to do this—it braces itself for labor, arms itself for conflict, prepares itself for suffering—it looks difficulties in the face, counts the cost, and heroically exclaims, "None of these things move me, so that I may diminish the evils, and promote the happiness of others." It will rise before the break of day, linger on the field of labor until midnight, toil amid the sultry heat of summer, brave the northern blasts of winter, submit to derision, give the energies of body and the comfort of mind—all to do good.

Misconstruction is another thing that love endures. Some men's minds are ignorant, and cannot understand love's schemes; others are contracted, and cannot comprehend them; others are selfish, and cannot approve them; others are envious, and cannot applaud them; and all these will unite, either to suspect or to condemn—but this virtue of love, "like the eagle, pursues its noble, lofty, heaven-bound course, regardless of the flock of little pecking, caviling birds, which, unable to follow, amuse themselves by twittering their objections and ill-will in the hedges below." Or to borrow a Scriptural allusion, love, like its great Pattern when he was upon the earth, goes about doing good, notwithstanding the malignant perversion of its motives and actions on the part of its enemies. "I must do good," she exclaims—"if you cannot understand my plans, I pity your ignorance; if you misconstrue my motives, I forgive your malignity; but the clouds that are exhaled from the earth may as well attempt to arrest the career of the sun, as for your dulness or malevolence to stop my attempts to do good. I must go on, without your approbation, and against your opposition."

Envy often tries the endurance of love, and is another of the ills which it bears, without being turned aside by it. There are men who

would enjoy the praise of benevolence, without enduring its labors; that is, they would wear the laurel of victory without exposing themselves to the peril of war—they are sure to envy the braver, nobler spirits, whose generous conquests having been preceded by labor, are followed by praise. To be good and to do good, are alike the objects of envy with many people. "A man of great merit," says a French author, "is a kind of public enemy. By engrossing a multitude of applauses, which would serve to gratify a great many others, he cannot but be envied—men naturally hate what they highly esteem, yet cannot love." The feeling of the countryman at Athens, who upon being asked why he gave his vote for the banishment of Aristides, replied, "Because he is everywhere called the just"—is by no means uncommon. The Ephesians expelled the best of their citizens, with the public announcement of this reason, "If any are determined to excel their neighbors, let them find another place to do it." Envy is that which love hates and prohibits; and in revenge, envy hates and persecutes love in return. But the terror of envy does not intimidate love, nor its malignity disgust it; it can bear even the perversions, misrepresentations, and opposition of this fiend-like passion—and pursues its course, simply saying, "Get behind me, Satan."

Ingratitude is often the hard usage which love has to sustain, and which it patiently endures. Into such a state of turpitude is man fallen, that he would bear any weight rather than that of obligation. Men will acknowledge small obligations—but often return malice for such as are extraordinary; and some will sooner forgive great injuries than great services. Many people do not know their benefactors, many more will not acknowledge them, and others will not reward them, even with the cheap offering of thanks. These things are enough to make us sick of the world. Yes—but they ought not to make us weary of trying to mend it; for the more ungrateful it is, the more it needs our benevolence. Here is the noble, the lofty, the godlike temper of love; it pursues its course like the providence of Jehovah, which continues to cause its sun to rise, and its rain to descend, not only upon the irrational creatures, who have no

capacity to know their benefactor—but upon the rational ones, many of whom have no disposition to acknowledge him.

Derision is often employed to oppose the efforts of love, by all the artillery of scorn. Spiritual religion, and especially that view of it which this subject exhibits, has ever been an object of contempt to ungodly men. Banter and ridicule are brought to stop its progress—the greatest profaneness and buffoonery are sometimes employed to laugh it out of acceptance—but it has learned to treat with indifference even the cruel mockings of irony, and to receive upon its shield-arm, all the arrows of the most envenomed wit.

Opposition does not disgust, nor persevering obstinacy weary true Christian love. It can endure to have its schemes examined and sifted by those who cannot understand them, caviled at by those who cannot mend them, and resisted by those who have nothing to offer in their place. It does not throw all up in a fit of passion, nor allow the tongue of petulance, nor the clamor of envy, to stop its efforts.

Lack of success, that most discouraging consideration to activity—is not sufficient to drive it from the field; but in the expectation of the future harvest, it continues to plough and to sow in hope. Its object is too important to be relinquished for a few failures; and nothing but the demonstration of absolute impossibility can induce it to give up its benevolent purpose.

If instances of this view of Christian love be necessary to illustrate and enforce it by the power of example, many and striking ones are at hand. Let the history of Paul be studied, and his suffering career be traced, and his declarations heard concerning his varied and heavy tribulations. "Our dedication to Christ makes us look like fools, but you are so wise! We are weak, but you are so powerful! You are well thought of, but we are laughed at. To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, without enough clothes to keep us warm. We have endured many beatings, and we have no homes of our own. We have worked wearily with our own hands to earn our living. We bless

those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us. We respond gently when evil things are said about us. Yet we are treated like the world's garbage, like everybody's trash—right up to the present moment." 1 Cor. 4:10-13. "They say they serve Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in jail more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled many weary miles. I have faced danger from flooded rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the stormy seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be Christians but are not. I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food. Often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of how the churches are getting along." 2 Cor. 11:23-28.

Nor did these sufferings come upon him without his being previously apprized of them, for the Holy Spirit had witnessed to him that bonds and afflictions awaited him. Yet neither the prospect of his varied tribulations, nor the full weight of them, made him for a moment think of relinquishing his benevolent exertions for the welfare of mankind. His was the love that "endures all things."

And a greater, far greater, than even the great apostle of the Gentiles, might be also introduced, as affording by his conduct a most striking illustration of this property of Christian love. Who can conceive of what the Son of God endured while he sojourned in this world? Who can imagine the magnitude of his sufferings, and the extent of that opposition, ingratitude, and hard usage, amid which those sufferings were sustained, and by which they were so greatly increased? Never was so much mercy treated with so much cruelty—the constant labor he sustained, and the many privations to which he submitted, were

little, compared with the malignant contradiction, resistance, and persecution, he received from those who were the objects of his mercy. The work of man's redemption was not accomplished, as was the work of creation, by a mere fiat delivered from the throne, on which Omnipotence reigned in the calm repose of infinite majesty. No! The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, as a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. The wrath of God, the fury of devils, the rage of man, the malignity of enemies, the wayward follies and fickleness of friends, the baseness of treachery, the scorn of official rank, and the many stings of ingratitude, calumny, and fickleness—all poured their venom into that heart which glowed with affection to mankind. Nothing turned him from his purpose—nothing abated his ardor in the work of our salvation. His, above all others, was indeed a love which "endures all things."

Such is the model we are to copy. In doing good we must prepare ourselves for opposition, and all its attendant train of evils. Whether our object be the conversion of souls, or the well-being of man's bodily nature—whether we are seeking to build up the temporal, or to establish the eternal interests of mankind, we must remember that we have undertaken a task which will call for patient, self-denying, and persevering effort. In the midst of difficulties, we must not utter the vain and cowardly wish that we had not set our hand to the plough; but press onward in humble dependence upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, and animated by the hope of either being rewarded by success, or by the consciousness that we did everything to obtain it. And we shall do this, if we possess much of the power of love; for its ardor is such, that many waters cannot quench it. Its energies increase with the difficulty that requires them; and like a well constructed arch, it becomes more firm and consolidated by the weight it has to sustain. In short, it is "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as it knows that its labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."

The Permanence of Love

"Love never fails."

Permanence is the climax of excellence. How often has the sigh been heaved, and the tear been shed, over the perishable nature of earthly possessions. Their transient duration presented a painful contrast to their great worth, and extorted the sorrowful exclamation, 'Alas! that such excellence should be mortal!' The charm of beauty soon fades, the force of genius is at length exhausted, the monuments of art decay; an incurable taint of corruption has infected everything earthly, and even true religion itself does not confer immortality upon everything that belongs to its sacred economy. One thing there is, which shall remain forever, for "love never fails," and its permanence is the crown and glory of all its other noble qualities. It is a truly immortal virtue—bearing no exclusive relation to earth or to time—but destined to pass away from the world with the souls in which it exists, to dwell in heaven, and flourish through eternity!

When it is said that it never fails, we are not merely to understand, that being once planted in the soul, it remains there as the center and support of all the other practical virtues—that it will so remain, is unquestionable; for its continuance is essential to the existence of personal and social religion. A man may change his opinions on some subjects—he may give up some sentiments once believed by him to be truth; but he cannot give up love, without ceasing to be a Christian.

Nor does the apostle mean that it remains as the spirit of Christianity until the end of time, amid every change of external administration—that it shall so abide is unquestionable. The genius of piety is unchangeable. This was the temper obligatory upon the primitive Christian; it is obligatory upon us; and it will be no less so upon

every future generation. A holier and happier age is in reserve for the church of Christ, "compared with which, invisible though it be at present, and hidden behind the clouds which envelope this dark and troubled scene, the brightest day that has yet shone upon the world is midnight, and the highest splendors that have invested it, the shadow of death," but this glory shall consist in a more perfect and conspicuous manifestation of the grace of love.

The apostle's reference is evidently to another world—his eye was upon heaven, and he was looking at the things unseen and eternal, when he said that "love never fails." He was then soaring on the wing of faith, and exploring the scenes of eternity, among which he saw this celestial plant surviving the dissolution of the universe, outliving the earthly state of the church, transplanted into the paradise of God, and flourishing in the spirits of just men made perfect, near the fountain of light and love!

To give still greater emphasis to what he says of its continuance, he contrasts it with some things, which, however highly valued by the Corinthian believers, were of a transient duration, and therefore of greatly inferior value to this.

"Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail." By prophecies here, we are to understand the giving of the inspired Scriptures; all new revelations from God, by oral or written communication, for the instruction and edification of the saints. These, so far from belonging to the heavenly state of the church, did not survive its primitive ages. The gift of inspiration was soon withdrawn, the oracle of prophecy was hushed, and all further responses from heaven were denied.

"Whether there be tongues, they shall cease." This, of course, refers to the miraculous power of speaking any language without previous study. This gift also ceased with the other extraordinary endowments of the primitive ages, and bears no relation to the heavenly world. Whether the communication of ideas in the celestial state will be

carried on by speech, is at present unknown to us; if it be so, what the language will be is beyond conjecture.

"Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." This expression most probably refers to what is called, in the preceding chapter, "the word of knowledge," and of which the apostle speaks in the beginning of this chapter—"Though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not love, I am nothing." It means an inspired knowledge of the types, predictions, and mysteries of the Old Testament, and of their accomplishment by the facts of the Christian economy. This, also, was among the signs and wonders which were to vanish away; which, having been granted as attestations to the divine authority of the Word of God, and for the edification of the church, were discontinued when the canon of Scripture was completed and settled.

Some extend the apostle's reasoning so far as to include every kind of our present knowledge; which, as to its imperfect attainments, and inadequate mediums, and present modes of communication, shall be removed, and give place to a more easy and perfect method of acquiring truth, and a more entire comprehension of its nature and relations.

As to the knowledge of the arts, of the practical sciences, and of literature, this shall be lost and forgotten, as utterly useless, and as bearing no relation whatever to the celestial state. You master spirits, you commanding geniuses, you magnificent minds, who exhaust the force of your intellect, and lavish its reasoning upon themes of mere earthly interest—see here the termination of all your labors. Scholars, poets, painters, sculptors, warriors—you who assemble in the temple of fame, amid the mightiest productions of human skill, to pay homage to each other, to receive the admiration of the world, and to immortalize your names—giving to your mighty works the full measure of their value, in reference to earth and to time—admitting that, in this view, they are bright scenes in the history of man; yet still in reference to heaven and to eternity, they are nothing—less

than nothing, and vanity. Not an angel would turn to gaze upon the noblest production of human imagination, nor will a plea be put in by a single inhabitant of heaven, to exempt from the destruction of the last fire, the most sublime specimens of human skill. Myriads of volumes have been already lost and forgotten; myriads more are on their way to oblivion; myriads still shall rise—but only to vanish—and of all the accumulations that shall have been made, and which shall have been going on through the longest and the purest age of reason—not one shall be saved from the general conflagration, as worthy to be borne to the heavenly world. "Knowledge shall vanish away."

But not only shall the knowledge contained in the scientific, and literary, and imaginative productions of men vanish, together with the volumes by which it was circulated—but all theological works—our creeds, our catechisms, our articles of faith, our bodies of divinity, our works of Biblical criticism; our valued, and justly valued, commentaries; our sermons, and our treatises—all shall vanish. The imperfect knowledge we gain from these sources is not that which will attend us to the skies, and be sufficient for us when we have arrived at the region of cloudless splendor, the element of wisdom, the native land and dwelling-place of truth.

The introduction of this idea by the apostle has given occasion for one of the most striking digressions from his track of thought which he ever made. His argument only required him to state that love is better than the gift of knowledge, because the latter shall cease; but he proceeds to show why it shall cease, and ascribes its discontinuance to its imperfection—he then takes an opportunity to draw one of the most sublime contrasts to be found in the Word of God, between our knowledge in the present world, and our more perfect comprehension of truth in the world that is to come.

And why shall knowledge vanish away? "Because we know in part, and we prophesy in part." A part only of truth is made known, and therefore a part only is received by us. This may imply that there are

many things we do not know at all. Who can doubt this? Upon the supposition that we were perfectly acquainted with all that is proper to be known—all that could be acquired by the aid of reason and the discoveries of revelation—still we would hear a voice saying to us, "Lo, these are a part of his ways—but the thunder of his power who can understand?" There are, doubtless, truths of vast importance and of deep interest, which have never yet approached, and in the present world never will approach, the horizon of the human understanding. There are paths in the region of truth, which the vulture's eye has not seen, and which are hidden from the view of all living.

When on his death-bed, the great Newton was congratulated upon the discoveries he had made, he replied, with the modesty usually attendant on vast attainments, "I have been only walking as a boy on the shores of truth, and have, perhaps, picked up a pebble or two of greater value than others; but the vast ocean itself lies all before me! My profoundest knowledge on the laws of nature may very possibly appear to the Almighty as the merest trifles of a infantile imagination." This is strictly correct in reference to the material universe, to which the remark was intended to apply. Of natural truth, the ocean, with its depths, its islands, and the continents and kingdoms to which it leads, is all before us. We have only looked upon the surface, and seen merely some of the objects passing upon it; we have only seen a few landmarks, on one part of one of its shores; but the infinitude of its extensive space, and the innumerable objects which that space contains, are yet to be explored.

And with respect to the spiritual world, although we possess in the volume of inspiration a revelation of the most sublime, important, and interesting objects of knowledge; yet, probably, there are truths of which, after all that divines and philosophers have written, we can form no more conception than we can of the objects of a sixth sense, or than a blind man can of colors. "We know only in part."

It is implied also, that what we do know, we know but imperfectly. In some cases, our knowledge is uncertainty, and amounts only to

opinion; faith is weak and mixed with many doubts. We cannot exultingly exclaim, "I know," we can scarcely say, "I believe." The object sometimes presents itself to our mind, like the sun seen dimly through a mist, now appearing, and then lost again, in the density of the fog—now a truth comes upon us, in a thin and shadowy form; we think we see it—but it is again obscured. We only see 'glimmerings'. We perceive appearances, rather than realities—dark outlines, not perfect pictures.

And where no doubts undermine the certainty of our knowledge, what narrow limits bound its extent! We walk as through a valley shut in on each side by lofty mountains, whose tops are lost amid the clouds, whose shadows add to the obscurity of our situation, and whose mighty masses stand between us and the prospect which lies beyond. How imperfect and limited is our knowledge of the great God—of the spirituality of his nature—of his necessary self-existence from eternity—of his triune essence! How feeble are our conceptions of the complex person of Christ, the God-man Mediator; of the scheme of providence, embracing the history of our world, and of all other worlds; and of the connection between providence and redemption! How have divines and philosophers been perplexed on the subject of the entrance of moral evil; on the agreement between divine predestination—and the freedom of the human will; between moral inability—and human accountability! How much obscurity hangs, in our view, over many of the operations of nature! How soon do we arrive at ultimate laws, which for anything we can tell, may be only effects of causes that are hidden from our observation! In what ignorance do we live of many of the most common occurrences around us! Who has perfect ideas of the essences of things, separate and apart from their qualities—of matter, for instance, or spirit? Who can perfectly conceive how the idea of motion results from that of body, or how the idea of sensation results from that of spirit? On what theme shall we meditate, and not be mortified to find how little progress we can make before we are arrested by insurmountable difficulties? On what eminence shall we take our stand, and to what part of the horizon direct our eye—and not see 'clouds and shadows'

resting like a veil upon the prospect? How truly it is said, "We know but in part." Angels must wonder at the limitation of our ideas; and glorified spirits must be astonished at the mighty bound they make, by that one step which conducts them across the threshold of eternity!

The apostle illustrates the present imperfection of our knowledge, compared with its future advancement, by TWO SIMILITUDES. The first is, the difference between the ideas of a child and those of a man. "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." The meaning of Paul in this verse is—that our knowledge in the heavenly state will be as different from, and as superior to, anything we gain on earth, as the ideas of an adult in the maturity of his intellectual powers, are to those which he entertained when he was a child. Our knowledge at present is that of children; we are not only in the childhood—but in the infancy, of our minds. Our notions are the opinions of children; our discourses are the lispings of children; our controversies the reasonings of children. The prodigious scientific attainments of those luminaries, Bacon, Milton, Boyle, Locke, Newton; and in the science of theology, of those great divines, Owen, Howe, Charnock, Baxter, Bates, Butler, Hooker—all these are but productions of children, written for the instruction of others less taught than themselves!

Yes, the apostle includes himself and his writings in the description. "We know in part, and we prophesy in part. When I was a child, I spoke as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." He alludes to his own childish conceits, and infantile simplicity, which had given way to the matured knowledge of his riper years; and, by implication, declares his expectation that the knowledge which he should gain in the celestial state, would be as much above his present views, as they were beyond those which he entertained when he was a child! Yes—that greatest of mere men—that illustrious individual who had been in the third heaven—who had explored, as we imagine, some of the secrets of the unseen world

—who had fathomed so much of the depth, measured so much of the height, of truth; even he tells us that his knowledge was but in its infancy!

What an idea does it give us of the infinitude of knowledge yet to be obtained, when we are informed that the Bible itself, even the New Testament—that book of books, the work of which it is said, that it had God for its author, truth without any mixture of error for its contents, and salvation for its end—is but a book for children, a work for Christians in their infancy; a mere elementary treatise on the subject of eternal truth, written by the finger of God, for his family, during their beginning education on earth!

The second similitude by which the present imperfection of our knowledge is set forth, is that very partial acquaintance which we gain with material objects by looking at them through a glass. "Now we see through a glass darkly."

Considerable diversity of opinion prevails as to the precise object of the apostle's allusion in the expression which he here employs. It is admitted that the word in the original literally signifies a mirror, and hence most expositors consider that the comparison is to a mirror; and that his meaning is that our knowledge of divine truth in this world, is only of that partial kind which we gain by seeing objects reflected from a mirror. But does this accord with his design, which is to represent the obscurity of our present ideas, compared with what we shall know hereafter, when that which is perfect has come? The knowledge we gain of an object that is reflected from a highly polished surface is too accurate to furnish such a comparison.

Hence some are of opinion, and this is the view I take, that the allusion is to those semi-transparent stones, which were used in windows before glass was known, and through which objects would be but very dimly seen. Nothing could better accord with the apostle's purpose than this. How dim and shadowy do those forms appear, which we discover through such a medium; we discern only

the mere outline; everything is seen imperfectly, and many things connected with the object are not seen at all. "We see it through a glass darkly." The term rendered "darkly," signifies an enigma, a riddle, a form of speech in which one thing is put for another—which, though in some respects like it, is but an obscure representation, and calculated to puzzle those who are required to find out the thing which is thus darkly shadowed forth.

Here it may be proper to inquire WHY divine truth is at present involved in so much comparative darkness and obscurity.

It is designed to accord with the analogy of faith. We are to walk by 'faith', which is not only opposed to the testimony of 'sense'—but is distinguished also from the clearness and certainty of perfect knowledge.

It comports also with the purpose of divine revelation. There is no doubt but that some of the clouds which envelope the subjects of revealed truth, could have been dissipated, and many things put in a still clearer light. A studied caution, a designed reserve, is maintained in some places; for as the Bible is given to be a test of moral disposition, the evidence should be sufficient to demand belief, without being enough to compel it. The Bible affords us light enough to assist us in discharging the duties of this world, and to guide us to glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life; but it concedes nothing to idle curiosity—nothing to a spirit of restless inquiry. It stands like a way-mark on the high road to eternity, and is intended simply to announce what is truth, and the way to its dwelling place—but not to make known to the traveler all the details of the city to which he is journeying.

And in another view, this obscurity is absolutely necessary. If the disclosure were more obscure, it would be beyond our apprehension; we could know nothing—and in that case true religion could have no existence, or exist only as the blind offspring of ignorance. If it were more cloudy and shadowy, it would have no power to arrest

attention, or interest the heart—it might indeed point to a brighter state, where it would throw off the dense covering in which it had enwrapped itself on earth; but too little of the beauty of truth would be seen, to captivate our affections, and to allure us to follow her to that world where she displays her unveiled glories.

But as revelation is now given to us, enough of the beauty of truth is revealed to inspire us with a pure affection—enough is concealed to make us long to see her face to face. And were all the knowledge that it is possible for us to receive, actually communicated to us, who amid such acquisitions could attend to the low pursuits of ordinary affairs? The immediate effect of such a disclosure would be to produce, so far as real Christians are concerned, a total stagnation of the affairs of this life. All the studies and pursuits, the arts and the labors, which now employ the activity of man—which support order or promote happiness—would lie neglected and abandoned. It is necessary that something of the 'magnitude of truth' should be concealed; something of its effulgence softened; something of its beauty veiled—or the holy mind of the Christian, absorbed in such a vision, would find all that is important in earthly life would seem utterly insignificant; and all that is attractive in this world would become tasteless and insipid. Disturbed in his lofty meditations, and interrupted in his ecstasies, by the din of business, and the obtrusion of low, groveling cares; and judging that scenes of secular activity unfitted him for communion with this heavenly visitant—he would retire from the social haunts of men, to converse with truth in the solitude of the hermitage, or the silence of the desert. So necessary is it to hang a veil on the too dazzling brightness of divine subjects.

This partial obscurity is also necessary, on account of the feebleness and limited extent of our faculties. Our minds could no more bear to look upon the unmitigated glory of divine truth, than the eye of an infant could sustain the unsoftened effulgence of the mid-day sun. Our minds cannot grasp in its full extent one single subject out of all the mighty Scriptural subjects. Some 'vague idea' may be formed of the almost illimitable range of the gospel plan of redemption, when

we recollect that its development is to employ our understanding in the highest state of intellectual perfection—and to employ it, not for a measured term—but through the countless ages of an endless existence! The study, the discovery, the enjoyment of truth, will form one of the chief felicities of the heavenly state; but what must that knowledge be, which is to afford something new and interesting through eternity? How can this be obtained by man in the infancy of his existence upon earth? There are subjects yet to be known, which would have no less surpassed the understanding of Newton, than his profound discoveries in science would the mind of a child.

No wonder, then, that we walk at present amid 'mere shadows and glimmerings'. But how humbling is this view of the subject to the pride of intellect! "The breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding." Job 32:8. The thinking mind is the glory of our nature; it is the candle of the Lord shining "in the earthly house of our tabernacle," and giving light to all the faculties of our soul, to guide their operations, and to direct them in their appropriate business. To what an immeasurable elevation does the thinking mind raise man above the brute creation! What wonders it has achieved—what stupendous monuments of wisdom and power it has raised! Who can mention the names of the giants of the 'world of mind'—and especially who can survey the productions of their genius, without having high notions of the capacities of the human understanding?

But what are all the works of the greatest theologians, the profoundest philosophers, when compared with the knowledge of the eternal world—but as the ideas of one who "thought as a child, and spoke as a child? "Shall any man—shall the greatest of men—be proud of their 'crumb of knowledge', their vain of 'childish notions', puffed up with their 'poor scantling' of information? Were the lowest and least of all the glorified men, to come down and teach a synod of the greatest divines on earth—how soon would he baffle and confound them—amid their most sagacious discoveries and most celebrated works! What infantile conceptions, what childish compositions, would be found out in their most finished

productions! So little reason has man for 'the pride of his knowledge'—so much cause to clothe himself with the 'garment of humility'!

HEAVEN A STATE OF PERFECT KNOWLEDGE

"But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part shall be done away. NOW we see through a glass darkly—but THEN face to face. NOW I know but in part—but THEN shall I know, even as I am known."

All these expressions refer to the celestial world, and unite to teach us that heaven is a state of perfect knowledge. Here on earth, we know only part of truth—then we shall know the whole. Here on earth, we know everything in a partial manner; there we shall know everything completely. Here on earth, we see truth only as we perceive a dark shadow through a dense medium; there we shall behold truth as clearly as when we see face to face. There we shall know truth with certainty and comprehension.

This last expression has been sometimes explained, as conveying the intimation that we shall recognize each other in the celestial state. "We shall know 'others', even as we are known by them." Many reasons concur to produce the expectation of this mutual recognition. We suppose that we shall somewhat maintain our earthly identity, not only of person but of character, and also the reminiscence of our earthly existence and history. We also suppose that we shall again be mutually known to each other in the heavenly world. This is one of the sentiments which the sacred writers rather take for granted, than stop to prove. But certainly this is not the meaning of the passage now under consideration. The apostle here speaks of our knowledge of things, not of people.

The felicity of the celestial state will, doubtless, include everything that can yield delight to a sensible, social, intellectual, and moral creature. It is eternal life—everlasting existence, attended by

everything that can render existence a blessing. It is LIFE in the fullest sense of the term—life in the highest degree of perfection. The glorified body will probably retain the organs of sound and sight—the purest of the senses, which will become the inlet of the most pleasurable sensations; while it will be forever free from the cravings of appetite, the languors of sickness, the distress of pain, the weariness of labor. The social impulse will be gratified by the sublime converse of the "innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect." The moral feelings will all combine in the most unsullied purity; while the intellect will be irradiated by the light of eternal truth. The heart will thus repose in the enjoyment of the chief good—beyond which nothing remains to be enjoyed. And the mind will repose in the contemplation of the truth—beyond which nothing remains to be known.

But we are now considering heaven under the representation of a state of knowledge, and as an intellectual condition. In this viewpoint the Scriptures frequently speak of the glory to be revealed. They call it an inheritance "in light," they describe it as a world where there is NO NIGHT. There "we shall see him as he is," "behold his glory," "see him face to face," expressions which relate more to the "eyes of the mind" than to those of the body. Perhaps we do not sufficiently contemplate heaven in this view of it. The greater part of mankind are taken up with mere sensations, and are but little acquainted with the pure enjoyment connected with the perception and the apprehension of truth. The rapturous exclamation, "I have found it!" is rarely uttered by the multitude over anything but the acquisition of wealth—or the gratification of appetite. But those who have been engaged in any measure in intellectual pursuits, will be able to appreciate 'the pleasures of knowledge'. Knowledge is to the mind, like light to the eye—and the perception of truth, like water to the thirsty.

Even the comparatively barren science of mathematics, which presents nothing to exercise the passions or gratify the imagination—the truths of which derive all their interest from the objective

evidence by which they are supported—yes; even these are a source of high and pure enjoyment to the human mind, which is ever seeking to arrive at infallible certainty, and can repose no where else. What exquisite delight has been experienced by some men, when, after a long process of reasoning, or a fatiguing course of experiments, they have at length arrived at a conclusion. If, then, in the present world, where the subjects of our research are often so insignificant, where our knowledge is obtained with such labor, is limited by so much ignorance, and blended with so much error; if amid such circumstances the pleasure of knowledge is so great—what will it be in the heavenly state?

Let us consider what will be the OBJECTS of our knowledge.

If we may be allowed the expression, we shall know all things that are knowable, so far as an acquaintance with them will contribute to our felicity. We shall know everything that is essential to the right performance of duty, or to the most perfect gratification of our intellect—all that lies within our proper sphere or compass as glorified creatures.

We shall perfectly comprehend all the laws which govern the material world. The discovery of these is presently considered to be among the most dignified and gratifying employments of the human understanding. It was his discoveries in natural philosophy which gave to our great Newton his notoriety. What a high station in the records of fame is assigned to those who have explored the secrets, and explained the laws, of nature! They are ranked among the illustrious members and most valuable benefactors of their race. They are looked up to with a kind of semi-idolatry, and their praises are continually chanted for their vast attainments, not only in adding to the stock of knowledge—but in accumulating fresh honors upon human nature. What sublime and astonishing facts are included in the sciences of astronomy, medicine and chemistry! How much of the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Divine Architect is displayed in the works of creation! Yet these earthly discoveries are now

hidden from a great portion of the redeemed, who by the disadvantages of their education are shut out from these sources of knowledge. But they will be admitted to them in heaven.

Creation will not be destroyed at the judgment day—but only purified. The 'vast and splendid machine' will not then be thrown aside, broken up, and consigned to oblivion. Nothing which the hand of the Creator has framed shall be forgotten. The brilliant scenes which are now passing before our eyes—but on which many even of regenerated minds look without understanding them—are not a 'mere passing pageant'. Beautiful was the remark of the eminently pious Bishop Hall, who, on being told in his old age that his views of astronomy were not quite correct, replied—"Well, it may be so—but I am going to heaven, and as I shall then perfectly understand the stars—I must leave the subject until then, when every mistake will be rectified."

So completely will all the disadvantages of our earthly condition be removed in heaven, whether those disadvantages arise from the Christian being born in an age when knowledge is in its infancy, or amid those privations of poverty which deny him access to the sources of information. In the hour of death, the pious but illiterate tenant of the cottage, on whose mind the orb of science never rose—though the Sun of Righteousness poured upon it the light of a spiritual illumination—ascends above the disadvantages of education, makes a glorious transition from the shadows of ignorance, in which he dwelt upon earth, into the cloudless transparency of the skies on high. His natural faculties, compressed and enfeebled now by the circumstances of his birth, shall then expand to a comprehension, and attain to a vigor, which is unsurpassed by the loftiest intellect of the human race! And he, too, shall know in heaven, the works of the God of nature—as he knew below, and shall still better know above, the works of the God of grace.

PROVIDENCE will form another mighty range of inquiry, and another source of delightful knowledge in heaven. By providence, we mean God's moral government of the universe—the course of the divine administration towards rational and moral creatures—that mighty scheme, which commenced its application before time was born, or the foundations of the earth were laid; which embraces the annals of other worlds besides ours; which includes the history of angels, men, and devils. Providence comprises the whole range of events which have taken place from the formation of the first creature, to the last moment of time, with all the tendencies, reasons, connections, and results of things; the separate existence of each individual, with the continuation and influence of the whole, in one harmonious scheme.

Providence is now full of mysteries. We are puzzled at almost every step. Innumerable are the events over which, after having in vain endeavored to sound their depth with the line of our reason, we must exclaim, "O the depth!" But we shall know all—why sin was permitted, and how it entered, with all the attendant train of now incomprehensible results which followed its introduction into the moral universe. It will then be made apparent to us, why so long a period elapsed between the first promise of a Savior, and his incarnation, sufferings, and death—why, for so many ages, the world was left in ignorance, sin, and misery—why such errors were permitted to enter the church, and so soon and so extensively to corrupt the simplicity and deform the beauty of the Christian profession—why the Man of Sin was allowed to establish his seat in the temple of Christ; to exalt himself above all that is called God; to utter his blasphemy; to shed the blood of the saints; and so long to spread the clouds of superstition, and the shades of death, over Christendom—why the impostor of Mecca was allowed to arise, and for so many ages to render a large portion of the earth inaccessible to the rays of the Sun of Righteousness—why idolatry, with all its murderous deities, and all its bloody and obscene rites, was left so long to insult the heavens, to pollute the earth, and to curse mankind.

What deep, unfathomable mysteries are these! How confounding to our reason, and how utterly beyond our research! What astonishment and delight, what inconceivable emotions, will be produced by the gradual unfolding of the mighty scheme, by the progressive discoveries of the connections and outcomes of things, and the wondrous display of divine glory which will be made by the whole. How shall we be enraptured to find that those events which now so confound us, were dark only by excess of wisdom, and that those facts which so often distressed us upon earth, were but the more somber shades of the perfect picture! What manifestations of Deity will then be made, when God shall admit us to his cabinet, and lay open to us the mysteries of his government!

And, doubtless, we shall not only see the harmony and wisdom of Providence in its general aspect and its more comprehensive combinations and arrangements—but in its particular bearing on our own private and personal history. The most important and interesting chapter in the volume of universal history is, to us, that which contains the record of our life. What clouds and shadows still rest, and in the present state ever must rest, upon our obscure and humble annals! How often is Jehovah, in his dealings with us, a God who hides himself! How often does he wrap himself in clouds, and pursue his path upon the waters, where we can neither see his goings, nor trace his footsteps! How many of his dispensations are inexplicable, and of his judgments how many are unfathomable by the short line of our reason! But whatever we don't know now, we shall know hereafter—the crooked will be made straight, the clouds of darkness will be scattered, and all his conduct towards us placed in the broad day-light of eternity. We shall see the connection which our individual history bears with the general scheme of providence; and perceive how, notwithstanding our personal insignificance—our existence was no less necessary to the perfection of the whole plan than that of the great ones of the earth. We shall see how all the varying, and numerous, and seemingly opposite events of our history, were combined into one gracious purpose of mercy, which was most perfectly wise in all its combinations.

Now we believe that "all things work together for good," then we shall see how this end was accomplished by events, which at the time put us to so much grief, and involved us in so much surprise. Delightful, most delightful, will it be to retrace our winding and often gloomy course, and discern at each change and turning, the reason of the occurrence and the wisdom of God—delightful will it be to discern the influence which all our temporal circumstances, all our disappointments, losses, and perplexities, had upon our permanent and celestial happiness. How much of divine wisdom, power, goodness, and faithfulness, will our short and simple history present; and what rapturous fervor will the discovery give to the song of praise which we shall utter before the throne of God and the Lamb!

REVELATION, as containing the scheme of human redemption by Jesus Christ, will be another object of our study and source of knowledge. The Bible is given to make God known; and one page of the Bible, yes, one verse, makes known more of God than all the volume of nature. But, after all, how little do we know of God, of his essence, of his triune mode of subsistence, of his natural perfections, of his moral attributes! What an unfathomable mystery is Deity! In what a pavilion of darkness does Jehovah dwell! Who by searching can find out God? In heaven we shall know him, for we shall see him face to face—we shall behold his glory, and see him as he is. We shall have as perfect an acquaintance with the divine character, as a finite mind can attain to; and in this one object, shall find employment and bliss through eternity. We shall never exhaust this theme. Eternity is necessary to study that which is infinite.

We shall there comprehend, so far as it can be done by a finite mind, the complex person of Jesus Christ. We cannot now understand this "great is the mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh," but what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. Then will the cross be seen as the central point of the divine administration, bright with ten thousand glories, and sending out its beams to the extremity of the moral system. The ruin of the world by its federal connection with Adam; the election of the Jews, and the long abandonment of

the Gentiles; the slow advance of Christianity to its millennial reign and triumph; the bearing of redemption upon other orders of beings besides man; the difficulties which hang like impenetrable clouds upon the doctrines of personal election, regeneration, perseverance, the freedom of the will viewed in connection with divine prescience and predestination—all, all, will be laid open to the view of glorified saints in heaven. Everything in the Scripture which is now dark, shall be made light. A reconciling point shall be found for every seeming contradiction, and the faith and patience of the saints be rewarded, for having received the truth on the credit of him who spoke it, without demanding to see before they believed.

Such shall be the sources of knowledge in heaven. O the bliss of eternally drinking in knowledge from such fountains!

We may now consider THE ADVANTAGES which the heavenly state will possess, for the acquisition of knowledge.

The soul will there be perfect in holiness, and thus the understanding will be delivered from the disturbing and bewildering influence of sin. In our present state of imperfection, the depravity of our nature contracts and misdirects our judgment—the corruptions of the heart send up a mist which veils the luster of truth, and conceals its extent and glory from the mind. The judgment cannot now see spiritual objects in all their range, and order, and beauty, because of sin. But in heaven this contracting and darkening influence will cease forever. No evil bias, no sinful prejudice, will ever warp the judgment—no disease of the soul will dim its eye, or enfeeble its power. With eagle pinion it will soar to the fountain of radiance, and with eagle vision bear the full blaze of its glory.

The natural faculty of the mind will then attain to its full maturity of strength. The mind is here in its infancy, there it will come to its maturity. Even the intellects of the greatest geniuses, while on earth, are but human minds in childhood, as we have already considered, and their most prodigious efforts but as infantile exercises. Here they

only tried their powers—but in heaven the mind will put forth, to their full extent, all those wondrous faculties which are now shut up and compressed in our nature, for lack of room and opportunity to expand.

In heaven, we shall not be diverted and called off from the pursuit of truth, by the inferior interests of the body. The soul will not be prevented from making excursions into the regions of light—by the cares, needs, and anxieties which abound in this state of being—but will be left at leisure to pursue her sublime researches. She will have nothing to hinder the acquirement and enjoyment of knowledge.

To crown all, heaven is an eternal state, and everlasting ages will be afforded through which the glorified mind will carry on its pursuits. Were the term of human life again protracted to the antediluvian age, what vast attainments would be made by us all in the discovery of truth! What, then, must it be to have eternity through which to grow in knowledge.

We might notice the CHARACTER of our knowledge.

It will be PERFECT—by which we are not to understand that it will be as complete as the nature of things admits of, for we should then possess a comprehension equal to that of God. We cannot perfectly know everything as it may be known—our ideas of many things must be limited, especially those which relate to the divine nature. By perfection, we mean freedom from error—our knowledge will be free from all admixture of doubt, suspense, and fallacy; our attainments will be bounded only by our capacity; there will, perhaps, be a gradation of mind in heaven, no less obviously marked than that which exists on earth—but all capacities will be filled.

Our knowledge will doubtless be PROGRESSIVE. Increase of ideas is, perhaps, in the case of a creature essential to felicity. We now find more pleasure in receiving a new and important truth, than we experience in all we before possessed. A state in which there remains

nothing more to be known, conveys not an idea of happiness so vividly as that where the delight of discovering something new is ever added to the joy of contemplating so much that is old. What a view of heaven!—An eternal advance in the most important knowledge; an everlasting accumulation of ideas; an interminable progression in truth.

"In the march of the mind through intellectual and moral perfection, there is no period set—this perfection of the just is forever carrying on—is carrying on—but shall never come to a close. God shall behold his creation forever beautifying in his eyes, and forever drawing near to himself, yet still infinitely distant from him the fountain of all goodness. There is not in true religion a more joyful and triumphant consideration than this perpetual progress which the soul makes in the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at its ultimate end. Here truth has the advantage of fable. No fiction, however bold, presents to us a conception so elevating and astonishing as this interminable line of heavenly excellence. To look upon the glorified spirit as going on from strength to strength, adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge; making approaches to goodness, which is infinite; forever adorning the heavens with new beauties, and brightening in the splendor of moral glory, through the ages of eternity, has something in it so transcendent, as to satisfy the most unbounded ambition of an immortal spirit. Christian! does not your heart glow at the thought that there is a time marked out in the annals of heaven, when you shall be what the angels now are; when you shall shine with that glory; and when, in full communion with the Most High, you shall see him as he is?"

How our knowledge in heaven will be acquired, whether by testimony, by immediate revelation, or by some method of mental application, it would be idle to speculate. We know that whatever mode is determined upon by God, will promote, and not interrupt our felicity; we shall have nothing of the weariness of study—nothing of the concern of doubt—nothing of the torture of suspense. Ideas

will flow into the soul with the same ease and pleasure on our part, as rays of light come to the bodily eye.

Whatever knowledge we gain in heaven will be TRANSFORMING—it will not be 'mere opinion' or 'uninfluential speculations'. All our ideas will be as fuel to feed the flame of love, which will then burn upon the altar of the soul; all will be quickening, penetrating, influential. Our opinions will be principles of action. Everything will lead us to see more of God, to love him with a more intense glow of holy affection, and to be more conformed to him. The light of truth will ever be associated with the warmth of love. "We shall be like God, for we shall see him as he is!"

It is difficult to find in the volume of revelation a stronger internal evidence of its divine original, than the view it gives of the celestial state, combining as it does the perfection of knowledge and of purity. Every other representation which has been given of heaven, bears the mark of an earthly source—the proof of being a human device. As in seeking for a Deity, man found the prototype in his own passions, when he had abandoned the one living and true God; so, in forming a heaven, he collected all the materials from the objects of his own fleshly delights. The Elysium of the Greeks and the Romans; the Hall of the Scandinavians; the sensual Paradise of the Mohammedans; the fantastic abodes of the departed Hindus—are all adapted to their depraved appetites, and were suggested by their corrupt imaginations.

A heaven made up of perfect knowledge, and of perfect love, is a vision entirely and exclusively divine, and which never beamed upon the human understanding, until the splendid image came upon it from the Word of God. How worthy of God is such a representation of celestial bliss! It is an emanation from his own nature, as thus described, "God is light—God is love." The glorious reality is evidently the provision of his own wisdom and grace; and the sublime description of it in the Scriptures, is as evidently the delineation of his own finger.

The Pre-Eminence of Love

"Now abide these three, Faith, Hope, Love; but the greatest of these is Love."

Such is the triune nature of true religion, as described by an inspired penman; of that religion about which myriads of volumes have been written, and so many controversies have been agitated. How short and how simple an account; within how narrow a compass does it lie; and how easily understood, might one have expected, would have been a subject expressed in terms so familiar as these. This beautiful verse has furnished the arts with one of their most exquisite subjects—poets have sung the praises of faith, hope, and love; the painter has exhibited the holy three in all the glowing colors of his brush; and the sculptor has given them in the pure and almost breathing forms of his marble; while the orator has employed them as the ornaments of his eloquence. But our orators, poets, sculptors, and painters have strangely misunderstood them, and too often proved that they knew nothing of them but as the mere abstractions of their minds—what they presented to the eye were mere earthly forms, which bore no resemblance to these divine and spiritual graces—and multitudes have gazed with admiration kindling into rapture, on the productions of the artist, who at the same time had no taste for the virtues described by the apostle.

True religion is a thing essentially different from a regard to classic elegance; not indeed that it is opposed to it. For as piety refines the heart, it exerts a favorable influence on the understanding, and by correcting the moral taste, it gives a still clearer perception of the sublime and the beautiful. It is greatly to be questioned, however, whether true religion has not received more injury than benefit from

the fine arts; whether men have not become carelessly familiar with the more dreadful realities of truth by the exhibitions of the poet, the painter, and the engraver; and whether they have not mistaken those sensibilities which have been awakened by a contemplation of the more tender and touching scenes of revelation, as described upon the canvass or the marble, for the emotions of true piety. Perhaps the "Paradise Lost" has done very little to produce any serious concern to avoid everlasting misery; and "The Descent from the Cross," by Rubens, or "The Transfiguration," by Raphael, as little to draw the heart to the great objects of Christianity. Innumerable representations, and many of them very splendid productions too, have been given of faith, hope, and love—and doubtless by these means many kindly emotions have been called temporarily into exercise, which after all were nothing but a transient effect of the imagination upon the feelings. It is of vast consequence that we should recollect that no affections are entitled to the character of true religion—but such as are excited by a distinct perception of revealed truth. It is not the emotion awakened by a picture presented to the eye, nor by a sound addressed to the ear—but by the contemplation of a fact, or a statement laid before the mind, that constitutes piety. We now proceed to the subject of this chapter.

It will be perceived, that although these three graces are in some respects very different, yet there are others in which they have points of strong resemblance. Faith has something of the expectation of hope, and hope something of the desire of love. Hope touches faith at the point of expectation—love touches hope at the point of desire—and thus, like the colors of the rainbow, they maintain their distinction, while, at the same time, they soften down into each other by almost insensible degrees.

But how are we to understand the apostle, when he says, "there remain these three?" He here alludes to the miraculous operations of the primitive church, and contrasts with their transient existence the permanent continuance in the Christian church of these cardinal virtues. Miracles were introduced to establish the credibility of the

gospel testimony, and having delivered their evidence, retired forever; but faith, and hope, and love, are to remain as the very essentials of true religion. Particular forms of church government are only the attire which piety wears, or the habitation in which it dwells—but these graces are the body, soul, and spirit of vital religion. When these are no longer to be found upon earth, godliness may be said to be retired and gone.

But are these the only Christian virtues which have outlived the age of miracles, and which are destined still to live and flourish on the earth? Certainly not. Penitence, temperance; yes, whatever things are true; whatever things are honest; whatever things are just; whatever things are lovely; whatever things are of good report—are as permanent and as strong in their obligations, as faith, and hope, and love—but these three cardinal virtues either represent, or imply, or excel all others. They are the main trunk, from which all others issue as the branches, and by which they are supported.

"Now abides faith, hope, love; but the greatest of these is love!" Love among the Christian virtues is, as poets have described Gabriel among archangels—a seraph loftier than all the seraph entourage. But we are not to suppose that it was the apostle's intention to depreciate the value and importance of the other two. What can be more important and necessary than the FAITH by which we are united to Christ, and justified in the sight of God; by which we purify our hearts, and overcome the world? Turn to the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, where the sacred writer seems to conduct you into the temple of Christianity; and after exhibiting the names, and the statues, and the recorded deeds of the heroes of the church, and displayed before you the spoils they have won in the battles of the Lord, says to you, "Behold the triumphs of faith!" Faith is the means of love—hence said the apostle, "Faith, which works by love."

Nor could it be his intention to depreciate HOPE, which is called "the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which enters within the

veil," of which it is said, "We are saved by hope," and every man who has this hope, "purifies himself, even as He is pure."

Much less are we warranted, from this expression, to select love as the exclusive object of our pursuit, and to cultivate it to the neglect of the other two. Separate from them, it can have no existence. Any attempt to build it up without them, is like the effort to raise a superstructure without a foundation. "Add to your faith, brotherly kindness and love," says the apostle. It is only as we believe the testimony of God's love to us, which is contained in the gospel, that we can possess Christian love to our fellow men.

What the apostle means is, that there are some views of love, in which it must be allowed to possess a higher degree of moral excellence than either faith or hope.

1. Love is the END, which faith and hope are the MEANS of producing. Love is what might be called an ultimate virtue; but faith and hope subordinate ones. Justification itself is but part of the divine means for bringing the soul of man into a state of moral perfection. The ultimate end to be obtained by redemption is the restoration of the image of God to the human spirit; and pardon is the introductory and subsidiary means. Hence faith, by which we are justified, is an exercise of mind, which produces, and is intended to produce, in us a conformity to the divine character. It is not a grace which terminates in itself, without being calculated or designed to originate and support anything else, which is the case with love. Sanctity is the end of truth—so our Lord teaches us "Sanctify them by your truth." The truth is received into the mind by faith that it may impart sanctity, which includes love. Similar remarks will apply to hope, of which it is said, "Every man who has this hope in him, purifies himself." Christian love, then, attains its eminence by being the ultimate virtue which the other two produce. Love is that moral condition of the soul which it is the aim and purpose of faith and hope to produce.

2. Love is a SOCIAL grace, while faith and hope are exercised in reference to ourselves. We believe and hope with an immediate regard to our own happiness; but in the exercise of love, we regard the happiness of mankind. Christian love is a constant efflux of benevolent feeling, from the pure fountain of a heart devoted to the well-being of our race. Faith and hope are the channels by which we receive the streams of peace and joy, from the fullness of God. By the latter, we are recipients of happiness; by the former, we are its distributors—by believing, we rejoice; by loving, we awaken the joys of others—by one, we become the heirs of salvation, who are ministered to by angels; by the other, we become ministering angels in our turn. What a philanthropist must that man be who cultivates, and carries even to a tolerable perfection, the disposition of love—so beautifully described in this chapter, and who displays all its properties in his communion with society. How must such an individual bless all with whom he has to do. As he pursues his holy career, sorrow is alleviated, care is mitigated, need supplied, wickedness reformed by his efforts; the groans of creation are hushed, and the tears of humanity wiped away, by his divine love—and he becomes in his measure, like that heavenly visitant in our world, of whom it is said, "He went about doing good."

Survey, with admiration and delight, the mighty operations and the splendid achievements of love—this powerful and benevolent principle—as they are to be seen within, and only within, the hallowed pale of Christianity. What are all the numerous and diversified institutions in our own land, where houseless poverty has found a home; craving hunger, a supply; forsaken infancy, a protector; helpless old-age, a refuge; ignorance, an instructor; penitence, a comforter; virtue, a defense—but the triumphs and glories of Christian love? What are all those sublime combinations of human energies, property, and influence, which have been formed for the illumination, reformation, and salvation of the human race? What are Bible Societies, Missionary Societies, Tract Societies, Peace Societies—but the mighty monuments of that love, "which seeks not her own, and is kind?" What are the tears of commiseration, which

flow for human sorrows—but the drops which fall from the eye of love? What the joy that is excited by the sight of happiness—but the smiles of love? What was it that made the great apostle of the Gentiles willing not only to bear any accumulation of suffering, indignity, and reproach—but to pour out his blood as a offering for others, and even to be accursed from Christ, and from mankind in general, for his kinsmen?—love! What is it that renders the modern missionary willing to go into perpetual exile from the land of his fathers and of his birth, to spend the future years of his life, and find at last a grave amid the sands of Africa, or the snows of Greenland; willing to exchange the society and polished communion of Europeans, for savages, whose minds are brutishly ignorant, and whose manners are disgustingly offensive—willing to leave the land of Sabbaths, and of Bibles, and of churches, for regions over which the 'demon of superstition' has extended his horrid sway, and beneath whose yoke nothing is to be seen—but orgies in which lust and cruelty struggle for pre-eminence? Love!

What was it that breathed into the heart of Howard that spirit which so filled and fired his mind with visions of human misery, and which brought from so many dungeons the plaintive cry, "Come over and help us!" that he could no longer rest in his own house, or in his own country—but traveled, again and again, across the breadth of Europe, in quest of wretchedness; descending into the captive's cell, that he might weigh his fetters, and measure his narrow apartment, and examine his food, to ascertain whether there was not more of misery in his hapless and forgotten lot, than justice demanded for the punishment of his crime; who inhaled the infected atmosphere of the lazaretto, to grapple with the plague, that fell destroyer of the human race, to approach which seemed to be courting death? It was love that formed the character of that illustrious man, and presented him to the notice and admiration of the civilized world.

What was it that gave courage, confidence, and self-denial to that extraordinary woman, who ventured among the furies of Newgate; where, if she had not cause to fear that assassins would attempt her

life, she must have calculated upon finding a sort of demons, whose malignity, excited by the purity and virtue which seemed to set in stronger light, by the power of contrast, their own vices, would vent its rage on the angel form which had disturbed them? If ever the shape and the beauty of love were seen in one of our race, it was in Mrs. Fry when she entered the cells of our metropolitan prisons, and called their vicious and loathsome inhabitants around her, to be instructed and reformed.

And what is it that makes ten thousand holy men and women employ themselves continually in all kinds of self-denying exertions, to instruct the ignorant, to relieve the miserable, to reform the wicked? These, O heavenly love, are your works, the displays of your excellences, and the proofs of your pre-eminence!

3. It is a distinguished excellence of love, that it is A LIKENESS TO GOD. We are not at all surprised that the philosopher to whom the question was proposed, "What is God?" should have requested a day to prepare his answer; and when that was expired, should have asked a second, and a third, and should have at length confessed to the reproving monarch who proposed the query, that the more he examined the more he was confounded; and the farther he penetrated, the deeper and deeper he seemed plunging into darkness and mystery. Revelation has come to the aid of feeble reason, and compared with the latter, has thrown a blaze of radiance on the all-important subject—and yet, with the light of truth shining around us, so little do we understand of God, that he may be said, as it respects us, to "make darkness his pavilion," for "who by searching can find out God—who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?"

Of his essence we know nothing—of his eternity, omniscience, and omnipotence next to nothing. His moral perfections are, it is true, more easily understood by us—but as these are all infinite, it is but little even of these we can understand, "He is a rock, his way is perfect, without iniquity, just and right is he." Inflexible justice, immaculate purity, inviolable truth, unimpeachable fidelity, belong

to him; but if this were all the view the Scripture gave us of his attributes, if the delineation of the divine character stopped here, how much would be lacking to the sinner's comfort! Can the trembling and condemned criminal take much pleasure in contemplating the power, the justice, and the truth of the judge, who holds his destiny in his hand—at least until he knows whether that judge has mercy also in his heart, and in his prerogative? and as little would it comfort us to know all the other attributes of Deity, if we could not exultingly exclaim, in the language of the apostle, "GOD IS LOVE!" Sublime and heart-reviving declaration! never was anything uttered more calculated to delight the soul of man.

Such a view of Deity is peculiar to revelation. Idolatry, in all her strange devices, in all her image-making processes, never conceived of such a God—power, wisdom, justice, truth, have all received their appropriate symbols of divinity, and have been worshiped under material forms; but benevolence had no statue, no temple, no priest. It was too pure a conception for the human heart, and too elevated an idea for human reason.

"God is love!" This refers not, of course, to his essence—but to his character. It means that benevolence is his whole moral character—not only that his nature is one sum of infinite excellence—but that his conduct is one mighty impulse to that which is good; in other words, that the divine disposition is an infinite propensity to delight in happiness, as already existing, or to produce it, where it does not exist. But be it recollected that the benevolence of God is the love of a governor or ruler, and not merely that of a philanthropist or a father; and who, in the exercise of his good-will to any particular part, cannot sacrifice the welfare of the whole; and, consequently, whose benevolence is not only compatible with the exercise of retributive justice—but requires it.

Such is the disposition of that divine mind, to which, by Christian love, we are conformed—that benevolence of the Deity, which, in its propensity to delight in happiness, and to create it, makes him

infinite in patience, to bear with the millions of crimes which daily insult and provoke him; infinite in mercy, to pardon the most aggravated transgressions; infinite in kindness, to provide for the needs and comfort of his creatures. The highest pre-eminence in Christian love, the richest gem in its crown of honor, is its resemblance to God. There is nothing even remotely analogous to faith, or hope, in the divine nature. He who is omniscient cannot be said to believe; nor he who is infinitely blessed, and possessed of a divine fullness, be said to hope; but he can and does love! Resemblance to God is the highest glory of man. We should esteem it an honor to bear a faint impress of some of the more distinguished of the human race. It would be thought a high compliment to have it said that our genius resembled that of Milton, and our benevolence that of Howard; that our faith was like Abraham's, or our meekness akin to that of Moses. But how much greater is the distinction to bear, by love, the image of God!

4. Love is ETERNAL in its duration—it ascends with us to the skies, to live in our hearts, as the temper of our souls, forever and ever. It is questioned by some whether the two other graces will cease in the celestial state. It has been contended that as the glories of the divine nature are illimitable and innumerable, and the glorified mind will not attain to a perfect knowledge of these at once—but be continually receiving fresh communications on this vast theme, there must be both faith and hope in heaven; for as we successively receive these, we must believe in the assurance of those which are to come, and must perpetually look forward with expectation and desire. But does not this assume what cannot be proved, that our knowledge of God and divine things will be communicated in heaven by testimony, and not be acquired by intuition? It is not at all necessary that our growing knowledge, our eternally accumulating ideas, should be thus conveyed to us; for they may, for anything we know, be the reward of pleasant study, or they may flow into the mind, as the ideas of sensation do into the soul, without any effort, and may also come with all the certainty of that intuition, by which we perceive the truth of axioms. To say that this is belief, is to confound two things

essentially distinct—knowledge and faith. So that it does not appear plain that faith, in any sense of the term, will exist in heaven.

But though it could be proved that, in some modification of the term, it would be exercised in the celestial state, such a belief would differ so materially from that which we now possess, and by which we are justified and saved, that it may with propriety be said, faith will cease in heaven. All the great objects to which faith now refers are 'absent'—we believe in their existence, through the report which is made of them in the Word of God; but in heaven they will be immediately present to the senses of our glorified body, or the perceptive faculty of our spirit made perfect.

Nor as it respects hope, is it by any means certain that this will exist in the heavenly state; for although it is difficult to conceive how there can be otherwise than a futurity, even in eternity, and how there can be a state of mind otherwise than the desire and expectation of future good—yet, as in hope there is usually some degree of doubt and uncertainty, the state of mind with which glorified spirits contemplate and anticipate future good, may be an indubitable certainty which excludes the restlessness of desire, and the incertitude of expectation.

In the hour of death, the believer closes the conflict with his spiritual enemies, enters a world where no foe shall ever exist, and where, of course, he no longer needs either defensive or aggressive weapons. He takes off the helmet of salvation, for hope is not needed when he is brought to full possession—he lays aside the shield of faith, for seeing and knowing have succeeded to believing, and he will be beyond the fiery darts of the wicked one—the breastplate of sincerity he retains, not as a weapon—but as an ornament—not as a means of defense—but as a memorial of victory—his feet are no longer shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, for he will no more have to tread on the snares of the destroyer, nor be exposed to his missiles—the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, shall be sheathed, and hung with the trumpet in the hall—praying will cease,

where there is no need to be supplied, no care to be alleviated, no sin to be forgiven, no sorrow to be soothed—watchfulness will no more be necessary, where no enemy is found, no danger arises—the means of grace will all be useless, where grace is swallowed up in glory—submission will never be called for, where there are no trials—and even many of the properties of love itself will seem to be absorbed in its general principle—many of its modifications and operations will cease, amid its eternal delight in perfect excellence and happiness—for there can be no forgiveness of injuries where none will be inflicted; no patience where there is nothing to suffer; no concealment of faults where none can be committed; no self-denial where there will be nothing to try us. Nothing of love will remain, nothing be exercised—but a pure and unmixed delight in happiness! How should it stimulate us to the exercise of mutual forbearance and commiseration now—to consider that it is the only state where these virtues can be indulged!

Instruction

Adopting the method pursued by the old divines, I shall take up this part of the subject in the way of INSTRUCTION.

1. May we not infer from it, the divine origin of those Scriptures which give such a pre-eminence to the duty of love.

The contents of the Word of God have ever been considered, and very justly, as an evidence for its divine authority. The Bible is its own witness—the sublimity of its doctrines, surpassing alike the invention and the comprehension of the human understanding; the harmony of its writers; the grandeur of its style, the more remarkable if we consider the illiterate character of many of those who wrote it; the elevation and purity of its morality, especially when contrasted with the condition of the whole world; the view it gives us of the

nature and attributes of the Deity, of the character of Jesus Christ, and the state of human nature, of the scheme of redemption, of the elements of evangelical piety, of the certainty and glory of immortality—are all the hand-writing of Jehovah, and together form this illustrious inscription—"THE WORD OF GOD!"

Where is anything like this among the works of men? Could ignorance have devised a system so sublime, or depravity a scheme so holy? But to go no farther than the subject we are now considering, and which may be regarded as not only a single precept of morality—but the spirit of the whole, is it conceivable that such a generous and self-denying system of duty could have sprung from the selfishness of human nature? Would man, had he been left to the mere exercise of his reason, and the impulses of his own heart, ever have summed up all morality and social obligation in that one word, LOVE, and have represented this as the essence of virtue? Is there anything analogous to this in any human system with which we are acquainted?

Examine PAGANISM, both ancient and modern; and what of this spirit do you find in its multiform varieties? Was benevolence, as has been already asked, ever embodied in an idol? Was a temple, a statue, or an altar ever raised to its honor? Abstractions of wisdom and power, and some few of the sterner virtues of human nature, together with many of its sinful passions, obtained a niche in the Pantheon; but such a virtue as that enjoined by Paul, not only was not worshiped—but would have been despised, by all classes of ancient idolaters, as diametrically opposed to those qualities in which they considered human greatness to consist. To say nothing of that spirit of cruelty which, like a demon legion, possessed, and tortured, and convulsed the worshipers of Moloch; even the milder and classic mythology of the Greeks and the Romans breathed into its votaries no spirit of universal philanthropy.

The patriotism of these nations, the chivalrous self-devotedness, which is blazoned with such splendor on the page of history, and

which kindles such enthusiasm in the youthful imagination—what is it but the light of a consuming fire? The patriotism of Rome and of Greece, in their best and purest days, was but a selfishness of the most destructive kind, which trampled down pure philanthropy with indignant scorn, as a base and cowardly spirit—a traitor against the absorbing glory of Athens; or of the Roman commonwealth. Those proud and haughty patriots thought that the world was made for them, and cared not what rights of other nations they invaded, so as they could strengthen their own power; nor what misery they inflicted, so as they could extend their own fame. Selfishness the most engrossing, was the soul of their system—every man considered himself as represented by his country; and, in contending for the honor of the latter, was fighting for his own aggrandizement. Had love been in the ascendant in those ages, the world would never have been made to lie prostrate at the feet of Alexander or of Caesar.

And who among the poets sang the praises of universal benevolence—who among the legislators made it the basis of their morals—who among the philosophers expatiated on the glory of human kindness—or laid the obligation to cultivate it upon the consciences of their disciples? The highest virtue of paganism was martial prowess. So heavenly a glory never shone upon it, as is contained in that one sentence, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," or if any theory, distantly analogous to it, was found there, it was a borrowed light, the dim reflection of the distant brightness of divine truth.

And as to modern paganism, we need not say how vain it is to seek for universal love amid the ferocities of the American Indians, the murderous cruelties of the South Sea Islanders, the disgusting selfishness and ridiculous vanity of the Chinese, or the insulting and degrading oppression of the Hindus.

Next turn your attention to MOHAMMEDANISM; and in what page of the Koran will you find—we will not say, such a description, and such an enforcement, of philanthropy as we have in this chapter; but where do you find a recognition of this principle? In all those

pretended revelations from heaven, of which Gabriel is said to have been the bearer, where is there such a description of Deity as this—"God is love!" or such a sentiment as that which arises out of it, "he who dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him?" So far from recognizing this principle, Islamism condemns and forbids it. It enjoins almsgiving, it is true, and gives it a high place among its virtues—but this is not the same as love, and may be often carried to a great extent without a particle of the nature of love. This system of imposture, abounding as it does with minute and ridiculous ceremonies, and a slavish regard to absurd ritual observances; enforces, by the authority of its founder, the most ferocious and blood-thirsty hatred, to all who do not receive it in the exercise of implicit faith. Wars against all infidels are not only enjoined in many passages of the Koran—but are declared to be in a high degree meritorious in the sight of God. How completely Islamism has filled its votaries with the most ferocious bigotry and the most merciless intolerance, is known by universal testimony. They everywhere pour insulting contempt upon all who are not Muslims, and feel a savage delight in adding cruelty to insult. "The infidel dogs," is a common appellation applied to Christians. The spirit of the system is everywhere visible in the absolute despotism of the governments of those countries in which it prevails. Where it is found, the arts and the sciences do not flourish, and liberty withers in its shade. The flaming scimitar of the Sultan is its patron and defense; it was propagated by the sword—it is supported by the bow-string, and it is essentially and unalterably cruel. Such is Islamism—a curse to the world, a mystery in the divine government, a dreadful obstacle to the spread of Christianity, and the reverse of all that is holy and beneficent in the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

INFIDELITY, it is true, has attempted an imitation of this virtue—but infidels have had the Bible to copy from; and even with this model before their eyes, have produced a caricature, instead of a facsimile. The 'universal benevolence' of this school is at war with the private affections and individual tenderness. The 'universal benevolence' of Christianity springs out of private affections and

individual tenderness, and is founded upon them. We contend, therefore, that this noble, and generous, and useful disposition is one of the peculiarities of revealed truth; and whence—but from heaven, could it have proceeded, and who—but Jehovah, either could or would have given it the authority of a law?

Whoever will reflect for a moment, will be struck with the singularity of the fact that the Bible resolves the whole of devotional piety into love to God, and the whole of morality into love to man. Is this, we ask again, the work of human invention, or does it look like the production of imposture? Would the selfishness of man have devised such a system; for where, among all his handiwork, do we find anything like it? O no! It is a part of the superscription of heaven—it is the impress of divinity—it is the seal of truth!

2. We learn, that the spirit of true religion is not only unlike—but opposed to the characters most admired by the people of the world.

In NATIONAL affairs. The character which the historian loves to delineate, on which he delights to exhaust the stores of his genius, and to lavish the richest coloring of his pencil; which he is most pleased to exhibit to the admiration of his readers; and in which, with an eager sympathy, those readers take as much delight as did the author, perusing it again and again; until the soul glows with enthusiasm—is not the meek and virtuous prince, who is intent only on the arts of peace, and the internal welfare of his kingdom. No—but the ambitious hero, who fills the world with the fame of his victories, and by the aid of dauntless courage, consummate skill, and inordinate lust of dominion, goes on from conquering to conquer. This is the man for whom the admiration of posterity is claimed; whose crimes are lost sight of, in the splendor of his military genius; and whose cruelty is forgotten, in the success with which it is followed. Thus it is that under the power of evil fascination, these demon-men are idolized in the sight of the miseries they have inflicted, and within hearing of the groans they have extorted—

merely on account of the vast military talents they possess, and of their power to torment others.

But the New Testament lavishes no eulogies on such men—bestows no praise on their deeds—but treats them as the bitterest enemies of human happiness. The 'sword of conflict' and the 'laurel of victory' are not among the objects that it commends to our veneration—but which it devotes to our detestation. The peacemaker is the character on which it bestows all its praises, and which it invests with its richest honors.

If we descend from national affairs to the more confined range of SOCIAL spheres, we shall find the same perversion of judgment, the same misconception of true excellence, and the same misplaced admiration. What is the character which is usually most applauded in fashionable circles, and also by the generality of mankind, whether rich or poor? Is it not the high-spirited individual who is quick to discern offense, and bold to resent it; who will allow no one with impunity to tread upon the skirt of his dignity, or his right; who is, perhaps, in some things, frank, generous, and affable; but under this exterior conceals a proud, vindictive spirit, which can brook neither a superior nor a rival—but is ever aspiring to distinction; who is courteous—but ambitious for fame; who would not willingly and intentionally give offense—but having given it, would feel himself forever disgraced by putting on the garment of humility, and asking forgiveness; who would give alms to the needy—but not honor the godly. Is not this the most admired of the world's favorites? Is not revenge dignified by the name of honor—and pride called courage?

In short, are not the qualities generally admired by men, of the active, irascible, and ambitious kind? And are not the meek, and gentle, and passive virtues looked upon with disesteem, and treated with contempt? Is poverty of spirit, is humility, is self-abasement, is the forgiveness of insults, is patience under provocation; admired, applauded, imitated? Is it to the character formed of these graces, that the silent homage of the heart, and the loud praises of the

tongue, are paid? Quite the contrary. The men who would practice the Christian graces, must make up their minds to endure the world's scorn, and to be treated as poor weak-spirited creatures, who deserve all the ridicule they receive, because of their forbearance in submitting to it. And yet this is the spirit of true religion—for this is the temperament of Jesus!

When Jesus Christ came into the world, he found it full of the notion that human glory consisted in ambition, pride, and revenge. The Jew and the Gentile participated in the sentiment, and hence he took particular pains to correct this notion, giving, in his sermon on the mount, a delineation of character the very opposite of this. Indeed, the design of that sermon was to rectify the mistakes then universally prevalent on the subject of 'true piety' and of happiness, and to teach the world that his disciples were to be pre-eminently distinguished by humility, penitence, meekness, purity, peaceableness, forgiveness, thirsting after righteousness. These are the qualities of a true Christian, and everyone who bears the character, must sedulously cultivate its appropriate dispositions, and be willing to bear the ridicule to which they will expose him. He must never seek to conciliate the favor of the unconverted, by imitating their spirit, or disguising his own; but bear their scorn, and wait with patience for a world where humility and meekness will be honored and rewarded, and love, their parent disposition, be crowned with glory!

3. This subject plainly shows us that true religion is exceedingly DIFFICULT.

It is a very common supposition that it is an easy thing to be a Christian. And if to be a Christian were nothing more than going to a place of worship, indulging in pious emotions, subscribing to religious institutions, and professing certain religious opinions—the supposition would be correct—for nothing is more easy than all this. But if the spirit of true religion be the disposition described in this chapter, then must it be obvious to everyone who knows his own

heart, that to be a true Christian is the most difficult thing in the world!

The Scriptures everywhere represent true piety by terms, allusions, and figures which imply the greatest effort, and the most persevering labor. Hence we are commanded to "strive to enter in at the strait gate;" to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which most easily besets us, and to run with perseverance the race that is set before us;" to "labor for the food which endures unto eternal life;" to "fight the good fight of faith;" to "mortify the deeds of the body;" to "crucify the flesh." What terms! what ideas! what metaphors! Can anything that is easily accomplished require or justify the use of such language? If it were a light thing to be a Christian, could the sacred writers with any propriety have employed such strong and very expressive figures? Nothing, surely, can more impressively teach us the absolute and indispensable necessity of incessant as well as vigorous effort. The course of a sinner is down-hill. "Easy is the descent to hell." A transgressor has nothing to do but to give himself up to the indulgence of his corruptions, and he will slide without effort to perdition!

Not so the true Christian. Heaven, by an appropriate figure of speech, is represented as on a high eminence, which cannot be reached without constant and laborious climbing. Not that all this is necessary to merit heaven—but to reach it—we are justified by faith without works, and become entitled to eternal life, exclusively by the righteousness of Christ; nor are we to conceive of the faith by which we receive this righteousness, as consisting of any violent strivings of our minds—but as a simple dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ, for acceptance with God—but we are speaking of the Christian temper, of practical religion, of sanctification, of going on through all the trials and temptations of life, to the possession of that crown of glory which Christ has merited for us; and if this be easy work, there is nothing difficult!

4. True religion is a comparatively RARE thing among men. This is indeed a melancholy and a painful reflection; for it is saying in other words, there are but few that are saved. It is applying to our own times the awful language employed by our Lord as descriptive of the state of things in his days upon earth, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." Tremendous, and truly dreadful is the idea, that the greatest part of mankind are moving towards the bottomless pit, and sinking daily in crowds to the miseries of eternal perdition! Such a sentiment ought not to be admitted to the mind, except upon the clearest evidence; neither ought it to be uttered by the lip, much less be recorded by the pen, except with a view to lessen the havoc which it describes, by disturbing the delusion which is the cause of this extensive ruin!

It is evident—at least if the Word of God is true—that no man can be saved without true religion; and that the religion which does not include Christian love, is, in fact, no true religion at all. The only enquiry, then, to be answered, is—Does Christian love abound, or is it comparatively rare? Is the great mass of human beings around us actuated by a spirit of universal benevolence—a benevolence which is the fruit of regeneration, and the effect of faith; which springs from love to God, and is cherished by a sense of redeeming grace; which is exercised in obedience to the divine authority, and with a view to the divine glory; which, in its operations, is full of forbearance and meekness, kindness, toleration, sympathy, humility and unselfishness? Is this the prevailing disposition of the bulk of mankind? Do we see it manifested in society? Alas! alas! instead of this, do we not still see those passions in operation which the apostle mentions as descriptive of the conduct of mankind to each other in his day. "Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled by others and became slaves to many wicked desires and evil pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy. We hated others, and they hated us." Titus 3:3.

Are not anger, malice, revenge, selfishness, envy, pride, and censoriousness—the predominant dispositions in the generality of mankind? Who can deny this, or who will attempt to deny it? And if this be the case, true religion must be comparatively rare. Few, indeed, are living in the exemplification of Christian love. Dreadful, alarming idea! I tremble as I write! My soul is distressed—and groans with anguish over my own statements. I would disbelieve them, if I could; and, even believing them, I would shut them up in my own bosom, if it were not necessary to promulgate them, in order to detect that delusion which, by leading men to think that it is an uncommon thing for souls to be lost, makes it a still rarer occurrence for them to be saved. I must come to the conclusion—for I cannot help it, without becoming an infidel—that there are, in our time, many more who perish, than are saved. "Hell has enlarged its appetite and opens its mouth without limit; into it will descend their nobles and masses." Isaiah 5:14.

Reader! Let the dreadful announcement, that it is a rare thing to be saved, startle you like thunder from your slumbers, and lead you to institute the most serious, and solemn, and impartial examination of your heart! Do not rest satisfied with a 'mere vague idea of religion', or a mere general, careless assumption that you are a Christian. Without such a disposition as that we have considered, you have no true religion; and without true religion, you must perish eternally! You have, perhaps, been a professor of religion, and have approved a gospel ministry, and have enjoyed the light and advantages of gospel ordinances; but this will only aggravate your guilt, and condemnation, and misery! If you are not living under the influence of Christian love, you are living without true religion, and must have your doom with those of whom it is said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all those who forget God!"

5. We learn the great criminality of many things still remaining, and in some degree approved of, among professors of religion.

National antipathies are too often found in considerable strength in the minds of Christians, especially in a time of warfare. Mistaking the nature of patriotism, and thinking, as did the ancient Greeks and Romans, that love for our country implies hatred of every rival nation—we are too apt to imbibe the spirit of the times and places in which we live, and to cherish a feeling of ill-will towards our national competitors. The religion of the New Testament is by no means hostile to a spirit of pure and sublime patriotism; that patriotism which seeks to exalt a nation by all the arts of peace, the discoveries of science, the inventions of imagination, the diffusion of knowledge, morality, and true religion. But the thirst of conquest, the love of aggrandizement, the lust of domination, which would make us dislike a nation because it limits our power and resists our aggressions—is an unchristian feeling, and an offense against the law of love!

From everything which would flatter the pride, or excite the ambition, or exasperate the anger, or increase the irritability of a nation—from everything that would swell the current of prejudice against another country, we should carefully abstain. As Christians, we should have no national enemies, no enmities and aversions excited by the geographical divisions of the globe. We should remember that God has made from one man, all the nations which dwell upon the earth—and therefore, that all men are our brothers, and should be loved as brothers. A Christian is, in one sense, a 'citizen of the world'; and although he was born in England, should abhor the thought of an 'national dislike' to any person of any other country. When national passions are roused and incensed, he is to bear no part in the widely circulating hatred; and amid much that he may regret and condemn, is still to remember that he is not to be "easily provoked."

Allied to this, is the passion for war. Whether the abstract principle of the unjustifiableness of war in every case, be tenable, we will not now discuss. But that war, as it is usually maintained, is utterly indefensible on Christian principles, can admit of no question. It is

but too evident that great numbers of real Christians are not duly impressed with the deep criminality and great heinousness of the 'warlike spirit'. Instead of bearing their testimony, by all proper means, and on every suitable occasion, against it, they partake of the general and murderous enthusiasm. They cherish the same antipathies; are actuated by the same 'vengeful, proud, ambitious spirit'—as the people of the world. They defend by argument the wars that arise, as just and necessary. They read with as much avidity the details of battles. They boast with as much exultation of the victories which are obtained. They enter as deeply into all the ardor of the warlike passion, as though they were the worshipers of 'Mars'—the god of war; instead of Jehovah—the God of love!

Ought these things to be? Are they not a manifest and flagrant violation of all their principles and professions? The whole substance, genius, and tendency of Christianity—is towards peacefulness. The God whom we worship delights in mercy, and is infinitely benevolent. The character of Jesus, who is our example, is formed of all the meek and gentle virtues—in the greatest perfection. The scheme of salvation is a plan of grace. All the doctrines of Scriptural revelation unite in their tendency to soften and sweeten the temper. The precepts of Christian morality forbid wrath, anger, malice, revenge of every kind or degree—and enjoin us, in no case to render evil for evil—but always to return good for evil. The whole tenor New Testament is directly opposed to that rage and resentment to which the world has given the delusive names of 'courage' and 'a sense of honor'—and from which wars and contentions proceed.

To these proud, harmful and evil fervors—which are but an imitation of the passions that rage in full force in the natures of brute animals—the religion of Jesus Christ offers all the opposition of divine authority. Let any man think of the crimes committed, and the miseries inflicted by a single battle—and surely if he has ever read only one of the Gospels, or one of the Epistles, he must be convinced that 'hatred of war' is an essential feature of practical religion. But we need go no further than this chapter to prove that the warlike

passion, even in the least degree, is opposed to Christianity. For if love were universally prevalent, swords would be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks! It is high time for the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, in every part of the world, to study the bent of their religion, since in the knowledge of this, many of them are still lamentably deficient!

It is a shame upon what is called 'the Christian world', that it has not long since borne universal, impassioned, and indignant testimony against that enormous evil which still rages, not only among the savages of Africa, or of the back settlements of America—but among the scholars, the philosophers, the Christians, the ministers, of Europe. In vain, so far as regards the diffusion of a peaceable spirit, has science enlightened the mind; in vain has learning softened the manners, and cultivated the taste; in vain has art multiplied the comforts; in vain has even religion established the faith, and in some measure sanctified the minds of the inhabitants of Christendom; for war—horrid, destructive, bloody war—is as much practiced, and as much patronized, as ever!

Whatever men have learned, they have not learned to love one another; whatever attainments they have made in knowledge, they have made scarcely any in love; however high they may have soared above the savage into the heights of science, they are still nearly upon a level in a taste for war. But real Christians should come out, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing—let them act upon their own principles, and become not only the friends—but the advocates of peace—let them echo back in their several spheres the angel's description of Christianity, "Peace on earth, good will to men," let ministers, from the pulpit; writers, from the press; private Christians, in their communion with each other and with the world—inculcate a fixed and irreconcilable abhorrence to war! Let the church of God be a society for the diffusion of the principles of universal peace.

Christian love forbids the indulgence of SECTARIAN prejudice among churches. God has for wise ends, no doubt, permitted the existence of various and conflicting opinions among real Christians—but, unhappily, instead of making these differences merely the occasion of mutual forbearance, and opportunities for showing through what interposing minor differences of opinion Christians can press to recognize and embrace each other; instead of converting them into tests of the sincerity, and proofs of the strength of our attachment—we have permitted them to rise up into separating walls, which divide and alienate our hearts from each other. Perhaps, even towards those whose errors are too fundamental to allow us to acknowledge them as fellow-Christians, much less to hold communion with them in the bond of church-fellowship, there is not enough of genuine love. For is there not something of bitterness and contempt, of wrath and ill-will—instead of that deep compassion and tender pity with which their situation should ever be viewed?

But as to those that agree with us in all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and differ from us only on the forms of church government, on the mode and subject of a sacrament, or on some of the minor points of doctrine, surely, surely, towards them we should maintain the full force of brotherly affection, without allowing our differences to interrupt for a moment the exercise of the most entire good-will. We would indulge a hope that in this age there is a nearer approximation than there was, of the various denominations of Christians to each other; that the spirit of intolerance is dying away; that there is a greater disposition to recognize each other, in the fullest sense of the term, as members of the same body, and brethren in the same family. But even yet, there is too much contempt to those who differ on minor points, remaining among ministers. There is too much of the sectarian spirit among laymen. There is too much of the feeling of rivalry and suspicion. There is too much disposition to misconstrue actions, to arraign motives. There is too much inclination to envy and jealousy. It is too common for the ministers and members of the Church of England to look with haughty contempt, and to speak as they feel, towards those who secede from

the church; and to revile them as troublesome schismatics, as rebels against established authority, who are actuated by a love of change, an impatience of restraint, a trend for democratic principles, a disaffection to the constitution of their country.

But is this love? Does this accord with the spirit of Paul in the chapter we are now considering? May it not be that the reasons for separation from the Church of England, appear in our eyes to have all the force of a divine law? May not those things which appear to be matters of indifference to our accusers, appear to be matters of great importance to us? Can it not be supposed that as moral questions are differently discerned by good men, there may not be all that error in our views, which is sometimes ascribed to them? Let the greater names of our denomination be read over, and especially let their immortal productions be perused; and then let it be said, whether they have not minds as capacious, learning as profound, piety as ardent, insight as acute—as can be found among those from whom they have seceded; and whether this array of names, supported and adorned as it is by all that can give sanctity or dignity to human nature, should not be enough to secure for us the exercise of Christian toleration. May we not be Christians? And if so, ought we not to be loved as Christians?

On the other hand, let the members of evangelical dissenting communities exercise a spirit of holy liberality towards their brethren in the Church of England. Let them cease from resolving their motives of the ministers of the Church of England into a mere love of wealth and power. Let them believe it possible that these 'churchmen' may have a conscience as tender, a desire as fervent, as their own, to know and do the will of God. Let them not conclude that 'churchmen' are necessarily the willing slaves of politicians. Let them suppose that love to Christ, and zeal for God, and benevolence for man—may burn as brightly and as purely upon the altar of these 'churchmen', as upon their own. Let them not cease, openly, manfully, and on all suitable occasions, to state and enforce their principles—but cease to state them with a spirit of bitterness and

wrath. Let not the ashes of the martyrs be gathered up, to blacken the descendants in office. Let them not visit the sins of the bigots of a past age, upon the ecclesiastical rulers of the present. Let them in all their statements, since they believe they have the truth on their side, throw over it the lovely and attractive charm of meekness. Let them read the names and the works of the authors belonging to the English Church, and realize that genuine Christian kindness should be cherished towards such men.

Love throws herself between the two parties, and calls for a truce to prejudice, and for the return of the sword to its scabbard. Let us consider how many, and how important, are the points on which we unite. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." We may certainly find, in these 'seven unities' a sufficient bond of union, a sufficient ground of love, and a sufficient scope for our sympathy, whatever varieties on other subjects may distinguish us from each other.

Let it not be thought from what has been said that it is only by Churchmen and Dissenters, in their opposition to each other, that the law of love is violated. For it must be confessed and regretted that the law of love is not always observed as it should be, by the various sections of the latter body. Baptists, Paedobaptists, and Methodists, are all too often actuated by a degree of envy, jealousy, and selfishness, utterly unworthy of the great cause of true religion, and altogether at variance with their common principles. What attempts are sometimes made by the Wesleyans to raise a prejudice against Calvinism and its adherents, by deformed, horrid, and ferocious-looking caricatures of that system. And, on the other hand, how often are the whole body of Methodists condemned by Calvinists, as upholding all the errors of Pelagius! Baptists pour unmeasured contempt on infant baptism—and are repaid by their opponents in ridicule on adult immersion. Statements are often given of the

sentiments of a sect, which that sect would deny—and consequences deduced from them, which they would abhor!

And then, what clashing of interests frequently takes place when a new church or denomination is introduced into a town or village! Sometimes this new church comes without occasion for it—there is really no need for another similar body of Christians—as the existing means of public instruction are already sufficient, both as to quantity and quality—and, in this case, to be animated by such a zeal for our church or denomination, as to set it up at the certain hazard, and especially with the very hope, of dividing a prevailing and hitherto peaceful body of Christians, is in the last degree a hateful effusion of party spirit. Men may call it zeal for the glory of God; but call it what they will, it is, when exhibited in its own deformity, nothing but envy, or the selfishness which seeks its own.

In other cases, what jealousy and ill-will have been stirred up in the minds of an existing church, by an attempt made by another church to establish itself in the same local area! It signified nothing how large was the place, how great the population, how inadequate the means of religious instruction—all this was left out of view—and the new church, though they preached the gospel in its purity—was opposed and disliked, because it came into a field where there was already an evangelical body, though that body could not be said to have occupied more than one little nook or corner of the uncultivated land.

It would be injurious to name any denomination as having manifested most of this evil envious spirit—no one denomination, perhaps, is altogether free from it; but we have known, in some instances, such wretched, paltry and wicked means resorted to. Such attempts to oppose the new comers, by defaming their principles, by insinuating charges against their ministers, by throwing suspicions even over the purposes of their private meetings. Such a system of espionage, by sending 'spies' to gather something to cavil at from the discourses of their opponents; such a series of tricks to draw away

the young and unwary from the other church—that we have felt it somewhat difficult, in witnessing this absence of Christian love in others, to retain it in exercise in our own hearts towards them.

Instead of indulging such envy, jealousy, and ill-will—all denominations who agree in the fundamental truths of the Gospel, should regard and hail each other as only so many companies in the same gospel army—or so many laborers in the same field—or so many workmen in the same building—having one common object, and serving under one common head. But alas! alas! Some congregations of professing Christians are exceedingly jealous and envious of each other! This remark does not apply so much to the larger bodies, which are to be found in our great towns and cities, as to the smaller ones, which exist in our less populous places.

But we have all too much prejudice, and too little Christian affection for each other. We all need more of the mind of Christ. We do not wish to see a spirit of indifference to our distinctive opinions—this would be a sin in the other extreme—but we desire to behold a more cordial good-will and confidence towards those who differ from us, and far, far less of the malicious envious spirit of sects and parties!

Christian Love would soften the harshness, and remove the bitterness, of CONTROVERSY. We are not enemies to well-conducted controversy. As long as the truth is attacked—it must be defended; and as long as error exists—it must be assailed. To give up the truth for the sake of peace, is a conspiracy against the Bible, and establishing a covenant with the enemies of the Lord. Not an iota of God's Word must be surrendered to error and infidelity. We must "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," and resist, if need be—unto imprisonment, torture, and death. A hollow, fawning, indulgent spirit—which would conciliate the friendship of men who are in rebellion to the Scriptures—by giving up, or treating lightly, any of their contents, has the curse of heaven upon it.

"Christian controversy is the safety valve of theological zeal. The 'party-spirit' of is opposed to it, being too intolerant for discussion. Truth has always triumphed by means of controversy—she has grown powerless only when the sleep of lethargy has stolen upon the church. What is Christianity itself—but a standing controversy with the infidel, the sensualist, and the formalist—the men of the world? We admit that the spirit of controversy, or, to speak more properly, the controversial spirit, is not, in itself, very conducive to the cultivation of personal piety. The angry controversialist and fierce arguer is not always a devout believer or an amiable member of society. The church has been sometimes as much disgraced by her advocates, as annoyed by her assailants; and there are internal debates and disputes, which, as friends to true religion, as well as friends to peace—we would wish to have terminated forever. But alive, as we trust we are, to the dangers of controversy, we must, nevertheless, protest against that timid, trimming, self-indulgent, ultra-liberal dread of religious debate, which would give up truth, to keep peace with error, and consign those celestial weapons of the spiritual armory—reason and Scripture—to the ark of the church, as useless regalia." (Eclectic Review)

It is highly probable that all controversy will never cease, until truth stands revealed amid the light of eternity. But there will come a period, when men will discuss their differences in the spirit of brotherly affection; when perhaps, there will be fewer points unsettled, and those few will be debated with toleration and mutual esteem. Too many, in their disputations about religion, contend for truth, until they have destroyed love; and even, in reference to the former, present it in so mutilated a form, as to deprive it of much of its own engaging beauty.

Luther's prayer should be presented by all—"From frivolous, fruitless controversies, good Lord, deliver us!" It is well observed by an old writer, that "Disputations in religion are sometimes necessary—but always dangerous; drawing the best spirits into the head from the heart, and either leaving it empty of all, or too full of fleshly zeal and

passion, if extraordinary care be not taken still to supply and fill it anew with pious affection towards God, and love towards man." There is no case in which good men are more under the power of the deceitfulness of the heart, than when engaged in religious controversy; and when, under the idea that they are only "contending earnestly for the faith," they indulge in all kinds of unhallowed tempers, dip their pens in gall, deliberately write, as deliberately print, and no less deliberately justify, the bitterest sarcasms—the severest irony—the most railing accusations—the grossest misrepresentations—the most uncharitable surmises. In short, when, as the controversy is about religion—a circumstance which ought to produce a spirit directly the reverse—there is no degree of abuse, reviling, and defamation, to which they do not have recourse. Such has been too often the tone of religious controversy, and by which it would seem as if the graces were mere heathen courtesans, in whose company a Christian should blush to be found; while 'the furies' were so many personifications of holy zeal, whose assistance is to be solicited in the support of truth.

Oh, what a handle has the spirit of angry controversy given to infidels against the whole system of Christianity! They have fought against Christianity with poisoned arrows, and the gall of furious church squabbles has supplied the venom in which they have dipped their sarcasms, ironies, and jests. It is high time that the apostle's exhortation should be practically remembered—"Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior." All who contend for the faith should remember Paul's advice to Timothy—"And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth." 2 Tim. 2:24-25. "For man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." James 1:20

Let any one read this chapter, and say if it be possible to justify the spirit in which contentions for the truth are generally carried on. Let

it not be pleaded that we are commanded to 'rebuke sharply', as if this furnished an apology for uncharitableness; for duties cannot be in opposition to each other, and therefore even this must be performed in a manner that is compatible with meekness and love. Unfortunately, the spirit of harsh embittered controversy is as popular as it is sinful—those pugnacious disputers, by whom it is carried on, are generally the leaders of a party, which thinks itself happy in a representative who with his shield can defend them, and with his tremendous sword can vanquish their enemies—and thus lead them on to victory and supremacy. It would be amusing, if it were not too serious a matter for entertainment, to hear how these people exult in the exploits of their 'formidable Hercules'; and to see how securely they repose under the protection of his fearsome and far-reaching club. What deep disgrace is it upon the professors and teachers of the religion of the lowly Savior, to suppose that his doctrines and his precepts require the aid of sinful and unhallowed passions to give them effect.

We may next exhibit the criminality which attaches to the sin of SCHISM, and deplore its prevalence. It will be necessary to explain here what I mean by 'schism'. No term has been more employed, or more abused than this—it has furnished to bigots of all parties, a theme of angry declamation, and a subject of bitter accusation and reproach, against all who differ from them in opinion; upon whatever ground, or in whatever spirit, that difference is maintained. Papists charge this sin upon Protestants; while the Church of England, in its turn, attempts to fasten the guilt of it upon all who secede from her denomination. It is circulated with eagerness from one denomination to another as a term of ignominy, and is continually calling into exercise some of the worst passions of human nature. Papal bulls, Episcopal charges, clerical sermons, angry party-spirited journals—are continually harping upon it. And multitudes, who have no other means of blackening an opponent, think that they cannot more effectually succeed in rendering him both odious and guilty, than by calling him a 'schismatic'. I will at once confess, that schism is, indeed, when properly understood, a sin of so enormous a kind,

that too much cannot be said for its condemnation. But it is not properly understood. In its etymological signification, it means a split, a division, a separation of that which was originally one. (Matthew 9:16, John 7:43)

Campbell's remarks are so clear and convincing on this subject, that they may with great propriety be referred to. As breach, or rupture, is the literal import of the term, in our language, whenever these words may be figuratively applied, the term schism seems likewise capable of an application. It invariably supposes, that among those things whereof it is affirmed, there subsisted an union formerly, and as invariably denotes that the union exists no longer. In this manner the apostle Paul uses the word, applying it to a particular church, or Christian congregation. Thus he adjures the Corinthians, by the name of the Lord Jesus, that there be no divisions, or schisms, among them—and in another place of the same Epistle, "I hear that there are divisions," or schisms. In order to obtain a proper idea of what is meant by a breach, or schism, we must form a just notion of that which constituted the union whereof the schism was a violation. Now the great and powerful cement which united the souls of Christians, was their mutual love. Their hearts, in the emphatic language of Holy Writ, were knit together in love. This had been declared by their Master, to be the distinguishing badge of their profession "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." Their partaking the same baptism, their professing the same faith, their enjoying the same promises, and their joining in the same religious services—formed a connection merely external, and of little significance, unless, agreeably to the apostle's expression, it was rooted and grounded in love. As this, therefore, is the great criterion of the Christian character, and the foundation of Christian unity, whatever alienates the affections of Christians from one another, is manifestly subversive of both, and may, consequently, with the greatest truth and energy, be denominated schism. It is not so much what makes an outward distinction, or separation (though this also may, in a lower degree, be so denominated), as what produces an alienation of the heart, which

constitutes schism in the sense of the apostle; for this strikes directly at the vitals of Christianity. Indeed, both the evil and the danger of the former—that is, an external separation—is principally to be estimated from its influence upon the latter—that is, in producing an alienation of heart; for it is in the union of affection among Christians, that the spirit, the life, and the power of true religion are principally placed.

Wherever an 'alienation of heart' takes place, and whatever be the occasion of it, whether there be an external separation or not, there is a schism. It may arise in the Church of England, and has, perhaps, arisen in the divisions characterized by the terms evangelical and anti-evangelical. Or it may arise—as, alas! we know to our shame and distress, it does too often arise—in our Independent churches; so that without any actual and visible separation, this dreadful evil may be in full and mischievous operation. On the contrary, there may be a diversity of opinion in the same society, as in those Baptist churches that admit of mixed communion, without any schism. And provided there is no alienation of heart, no interruption to mutual esteem and good will—there may be even an external separation, without schism.

This sin of schism can have no existence except in those cases where the unity of the spirit is disturbed, and the bond of peace is severed. As long as sincere love remains, there is, in the full sense of the term, no schism. Consequently, whatever tends to alienate the hearts of Christians from each other, whatever tends to produce discord, whatever tends to stir up strife—no matter who may be guilty of such conduct—is the very essence of this hateful vice of schism. If men will attempt to coerce the conscience, by legislating for others in such matters as those of religion, and interfere, by human authority, in affairs which should be transacted through the medium of the Bible, between God and the soul—they must be answerable for those divisions which arise from the conscientious objections of people who cannot submit to such enactments.

If to separate peaceably from the Church of England, be the sin of schism, how will the Church of England justify itself from the same charge brought against her by the Church of Rome? The schismatic is not he who peaceably secedes; but he who renders secession necessary, by setting up requirements with which the separatist cannot comply, without violating his conscience. Not that I mean to say Episcopalians, or even the supporters of any established religion whatever, are schismatical, except where their conduct is such as is calculated to produce mutual disaffection; so neither, on the other hand, are dissenters justly chargeable with this sin, unless their conduct can be fairly proved to be founded on a factious spirit of ill-will towards the religious establishment of the country. It is nothing to say that their dissent proceeds on insufficient grounds, and their objections to the Church, as by law established, are to things that are indifferent in themselves, and therefore frivolous and vexatious. If they are indifferent matters, why then impose them? but of their indifference or importance, dissenters themselves must judge, as did the reformed churches of Christendom, of the corruptions of Popery.

If a dissenter employs himself in stirring up ill-will towards the members of the Church of England, by arraigning the motives of its ministers, and charging them with sordid avarice, or a mere love of worldly pomp and domination; or by questioning the piety of its members; or by exciting animosity; or producing alienation of heart in the minds of his own party—or if he so states, defends, and enforces his own principles, as that the natural result in those who hear him shall be an interruption to all communion of heart, and to the exercise of all mutual good will between the two denominations—if he employ himself in widening the breach between them, and repelling them further from each other—he is indeed a schismatic, and deserves all the reproach which such conduct can bring upon him. But then it should be recollected that no less guilty of the sin of schism, is he who, as a minister of the Church of England, employs his talents in holding up dissenters to public ridicule as a factious, troublesome, dangerous body, seceding upon no grounds but such as

are frivolous, entitled to reproach for what they have done, and to suspicion of what they may do.

But leaving names and parties, schism is the sin of doing anything to alienate men's hearts from each other, whatever be the occasion or the means of the estrangement. And it is a sin of a magnitude and enormity, which few can estimate. It is the very opposite of love; and in saying this, we arraign it upon the most solemn and the most capital charge which any indictment can prefer. We all have, perhaps, something of this schismatic spirit. But little does it occur to some men, when they are advancing their charges, and fulminating their anathemas against others for the sin of schism, that, while in the eye of God, the objects of their anger are innocent of the crime that is laid to their charge—they themselves are regarded by Him whose judgment is according to truth, as the greatest schismatics upon earth.

The temptation cannot be resisted of introducing here a long—but no one who has a taste for literary or moral beauty will deem it too long—extract from the writings of Mr. Hall— "The Roman Catholic church no doubt looked upon it as a signal triumph, when she prevailed on France's King Louis, to suppress the Protestant religion. But what was the consequence? Where shall we look, after this period, for her Fenelons and her Pascals—where for the distinguished monuments of piety and learning, which were the glory of her better days? As for piety, she perceived she had no occasion for it, when there was no luster of Christian holiness surrounding her—nor for learning, when she had no longer any opponents to confute, or any controversies to maintain. She felt herself at liberty to become as ignorant, as secular, as irreligious, as she pleased; and amid the silence and darkness she had created around her, she drew the curtains, and retired to rest. The accession of numbers she gained by suppressing her opponents, was like the small extension of length a body acquires by death—the feeble remains of life were extinguished, and she lay a putrid corpse—a public nuisance, filling the air with pestilential exhalations.

"Such, there is every reason to believe, would be the effect of similar measures in England. That union among Christians which it is so desirable to recover, must, we are persuaded, be the result of something more heavenly and divine than legal restraints or angry controversies. Unless an angel were to descend for that purpose, the spirit of division is a disease which will never be healed by troubling the waters. We must expect the cure from the increasing prevalence of true religion, and from a copious communication of the Spirit to produce that event. A more extensive diffusion of piety, among all sects and parties, will be the best and only preparation for a cordial union. Christians will then be disposed to appreciate their differences more equitably, to turn their chief attention to points on which they agree, and, in consequence of loving each other more, to make every concession consistent with a good conscience. Instead of wishing to vanquish others, everyone will be desirous of being vanquished by the truth. A filial fear of God, and an exclusive desire of discovering his mind, will hold a torch before them in their inquiries, which will illuminate the path in which they are to tread. Instead of being repelled by mutual antipathy, they will be insensibly drawn nearer to each other by the ties of mutual attachment. A larger measure of the spirit of Christ would prevent them from condemning every legitimate difference which others might have.

"The general prevalence of piety in different communities would inspire that mutual respect, that heart-felt homage for the virtues conspicuous in the character of their respective members, which would urge us to ask with astonishment and regret—Why cannot we be one? what is it which obstructs our union? Instead of maintaining the barrier which separates us from each other, and employing ourselves in fortifying the frontiers of hostile communities, we should be anxiously devising the means of narrowing the grounds of dispute, by drawing the attention of all parties to those fundamental Biblical principles in which they concur.

"To this we may add, that a more perfect subjection to the authority of the great Head of the church, would restrain men from inventing

new terms of fellowship, from lording it over conscience, or from exacting a scrupulous compliance with things which the Word of God has left indifferent. That sense of our own imperfect knowledge, should incline us to be looking up for a superior light, and make us think it not improbable that, in the long night which has befallen us, we have all more or less mistaken our way—and have much to learn, and much of our own deficient knowledge to correct. The very idea of identifying a particular party as the 'true church' would be exploded—the foolish clamor about schism, hushed—and no one, however poor his knowledge, should be expected to surrender his conscience to the claims of ecclesiastical dominion.

"The New Testament is surely not so obscure a book that, were its contents to fall into the hands of a hundred serious, impartial men, it would produce such opposite conclusions as must necessarily issue in their forming two or more separate communions. It is remarkable, indeed, that the chief points about which real Christians are divided, are points on which the Scripture is silent—mere human fabrications which the presumption of men has attached to the Christian system. A larger communication of the Spirit of truth would insensibly lead Christians into a similar train of thinking; and being more under the guidance of that infallible Teacher, they would gradually tend to the same point, and settle in the same conclusions. Without such an influence as this, the coalescing into one community would probably be productive of much mischief; it certainly would do no sort of good, since it would be the mere result of 'intolerance and pride' acting upon 'indolence and fear'.

"During the present disjointed state of things, then, nothing remains but for everyone to whom the care of any part of the church of Christ is entrusted, to exert himself to the utmost in the promotion of vital religion, in cementing the friendship of the good, and repressing with a firm and steady hand the heats and eruptions of harsh, intolerant party spirit. He will find sufficient employment for his time and his talents, in inculcating the great truths of the gospel, and endeavoring to 'form Christ' in his hearers, without blowing the 'flames of

contention', or widening that breach which is already the disgrace and calamity of the Christian name. Were our efforts uniformly to take this direction, there would be an identity in the impression made by religious instruction; the distortion of party features would gradually disappear; and Christians would everywhere approach toward that ideal beauty spoken of by painters, which is composed of the finest lines and traits conspicuous in individual forms. Since they have all drunk into the same spirit, it is manifest nothing is lacking—but a larger portion of that spirit, to lay the foundation of a solid, cordial union. It is to the immoderate attachment to secular interests—the love of power—and not the lack of evidence for truth—not to the obscurities of revelation, we must impute the unhappy contentions among Christians—maladies which nothing can correct—but deep and genuine piety. The real schismatic is not so properly the person who declines a compliance with what he judges to be wrong, though he may be mistaken in that judgment—so much as the man who sedulously employs every artifice to alienate the affections of good men from each other."

How desirable it is that true religion should prevail more than it does. If the spirit of true religion is love, then who can avoid longing for its universal dominion? How much is it to be coveted for the peace of our churches! It must be confessed, and that with grief and shame, that Zion is not yet a "peaceful habitation," nor do all her assemblies present the good and the pleasant sight of brethren dwelling together in unity. Contentions about one thing and another abound. The seeds of discord are plentifully sown, and bear an exuberant crop of the fruits of contention. How many religious communities are shattered by discord—to their own injury, to the exultation of their enemies, and to the discredit of true religion! Many are the causes which produce this unhappy state of things; but that which gives force to them all, is the absence, or the weakness—of love. Here is the grand defect, and all other circumstances are but subsidiary. It is most melancholy and humiliating to discover, when some trifling disagreement occurs, what small attainments in piety and love these churches have made; how insignificant is the subject

over which two parties will engage with all the eagerness of contention; and how bitter the spirit with which the contention is carried on. It has been said that quarrels about religion have been usually maintained with more malevolence than any other. This we deny; but, at the same time, we must admit that they are often sustained with a measure of bitterness that is a disgrace to all concerned.

The usual occasion of disagreement is either the 'dismissal' or the 'choice' of a minister. And not infrequently do believers wrangle about him who is to teach them, until they have lost the very spirit of piety itself. But whatever may be the occasion, lack of love is the cause of all feuds and strifes!

Oh! what churches we would have, if Christian love had its full scope! The PASTOR would labor with the most earnest, indefatigable, and unselfish zeal for the eternal welfare of the flock; and make it evident that compassion for souls, and not filthy lucre, was the impulse of all his conduct. Affection would beam in his eyes, and breathe in his spirit, while "the law of kindness" would dwell on his lips. He would preside over the people in the meekness of wisdom; and, instead of proudly lording it over God's heritage, he would rule them in love. He would be gentle among them, "as a mother feeding and caring for her own children." Instead of being provoked by any little unintentional infringement on his rights, or disrespect to his dignity, he would bear with that which is the result of ignorance, and wisely and meekly reason with those who wronged him. Over all his talents, however brilliant, he would put the 'garment of humility'. And, with respect to all his success, however great, he would speak in the language of modesty. He would neither envy his more gifted or successful brethren, nor proudly vaunt over his inferiors. To all under his pastoral care, even the most illiterate and poor, he would conduct himself with the humility and love of true benevolence, put the most favorable construction on the actions of his people, repose in them an honorable confidence, labor to correct their errors,

whether doctrinal or practical, and have no greater joy than to see them walking in the truth!

Christian love would also dictate to the PEOPLE towards their minister, a line of conduct no less pious than amiable. It would lead them to attach themselves decidedly and warmly to his person and ministry; to demonstrate in every possible way their sincere and cordial wish to promote his comfort; to abstain from everything that would grieve his mind, and by every means in their power to promote his usefulness. It would not allow them to be offended by his faithful rebukes—but cause them to submit, with Christian frankness and humility, to his cautious admonitions and reproofs. Christian love would lead them to interpret, in a favorable manner, any little neglects, or unintentional offenses—and would make willing and reasonable excuses for his seeming inattention. Christian love would cover, and not expose—his minor shortcomings, faults and foibles. Christian love would lead them to manifest a fitting respect for his office and opinion—and, while it would leave them in full possession of entire freedom of thought, and manly dignity of conduct, would still prescribe that humility and respect, which the Scriptures claim for those who are set over them in the Lord.

In the conduct of the people towards EACH OTHER, Christian love would check all that irritability which is excited by a word—all that anger which is cherished until it ripens into malice or revenge. How much is the peace of our churches disturbed by such hot or sullen people! But did this heavenly virtue prevail, care would be taken not to give offense; and equal care would be in exercise not to take offense. One man would bridle his tongue, lest he should utter words that would grieve; another would control in his temper, lest he should be provoked when he ought not; and all would be watchful against whatever would destroy the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. If any action has been done, or any word spoken, of a doubtful kind, no one would suspect an evil motive—but rather be ready to conclude in favor of a good intention; suspicion would be displaced by mutual confidence; and hasty imputations of what is

wrong, would be displaced by the belief or hope of what is right. Instead of circulating ill reports of each other, or believing them when circulated, all would entertain too much good-will, and too high an opinion of their brethren, to listen to an insinuation against them. Universal kindness would reign throughout the society—each would feel an interest in the whole, and by "whatever things are lovely," would promote their comfort, and bear their burdens. There would be no struggle for pre-eminence, no grasping at power—such pride would be abhorred, and all would be subject one to another—the rich would not be puffed up, nor vaunt themselves against the poor, nor would the poor envy the rich. In a time of difficulty, such as the choice of a minister, there would be a giving up as far as possible, of individual feeling, and all would consider the general good; no one would selfishly wish to have his taste alone consulted—or his opinion alone attended to. No one would obtrude his views upon the rest in an unseemly manner—but each would consult all.

We may again remark, what churches we would have, if love were the ruling principle which governed them. "Then would each of them present a peaceful haven, inviting men to retire from the tossing and perils of this unquiet ocean to a sacred enclosure, a sequestered spot, which the storms and tempests of the world were not permitted to invade." Then would the prayer of Christ be answered, and his people be one, and show by their unity a demonstration of the divinity of his mission, which the most impious could not resist—then would the church on earth present a calm, unruffled surface; which would reflect, as from a mirror, a bright resemblance of the church in heaven. Let us, then, for the honor of our principles, for the credit of our common Christianity, for our own peace and comfort in relation to the body of the people—seek that more of this heavenly spirit of Christian love, may be diffused among all who are called by the name of Christ.

How desirable is it that such a religion as this, should be spread over the face of the whole earth! In what a miserable condition is our globe. The whole world lies in the wicked one—is entangled in the

coils, and bitten by the fangs, and tortured by the venom of the old serpent—the devil. Justly has the apostle said, that "the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." Nearly eighteen centuries have passed since Paul saw this bleeding victim of Satan's cruelty, and heard its groans—and it is bleeding and groaning still. Wherever we go, either in reality or in imagination, we find ourselves in a valley of tears, where forms of misery, indefinitely varied, and almost innumerably multiplied, rise before our eyes, and utter nothing but, "Woe, woe, woe!" Who can wonder that our world should thus be little else but a region of misery?

Think upon the evil passions which predominate in human affairs. Think of the vile affections, which, like furies, tyrannize over the minds of men—wrath, malice, revenge, envy, pride, suspicion, selfishness, cruelty, slander—these are the tyrants of diabolical government, which usurp the dominion of the world in the name of Satan, and which with something of his power and his fury, torment the miserable children of men. How much of cruel slavery, bloody warfare, remorseless oppression, deadly revenge, operative mischief, crafty subtlety, insulting pride—is perpetually at work in the destruction of human happiness! The prevalence of Christian love would put a stop to all this—it would beat the 'sword of war' into the 'ploughshare of peace'. Christian love would break the galling fetter of slavery, and bid the captive go free. Christian love would change the tyrant into a kind father. Christian love would convert the venom of malice into the milk of human kindness. Christian love would transform the crafty serpent into the innocent dove. Christian love would tame the ferocity of the implacable assassin into mercifulness. Christian love would teach him to pronounce forgiveness, who now breathes out nothing but slaughter. Christian love would teach pride, to put on humility as a garment. Christian love would give to the vigilant eye of intelligence, the expression of toleration, instead of the glance of suspicion. Christian love would substitute, for the torment of envy—the exquisite delight of that sympathy which can rejoice with those who rejoice.

What an argument for Christian missions! And what a motive to their zealous support! We have already proved that both Paganism and Mohammanism are hostile to a spirit of universal benevolence. If, therefore, the world is ever to be subjugated to the mild and beneficial dominion of love, the conquest must be made by Christianity. And to this honor is Christianity destined—it was to this theme that the evangelical prophet struck his lyre, when he said "Many nations will come and say—Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Israel. There he will teach us his ways, so that we may obey him. For in those days the Lord's teaching and his word will go out from Jerusalem. The Lord will settle international disputes. All the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All wars will stop, and military training will come to an end. Everyone will live quietly in their own homes in peace and prosperity, for there will be nothing to fear. The Lord Almighty has promised this!" "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard and the goat will be at peace. Calves and yearlings will be safe among lions, and a little child will lead them all. The cattle will graze among bears. Cubs and calves will lie down together. And lions will eat grass as the livestock do. Babies will crawl safely among poisonous snakes. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes and pull it out unharmed. Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain. And as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the Lord."

Such is the poetic and beautiful description which is given by the prophet, of the harmonizing and benevolent tendency of the Gospel, as well as of its effect wherever its influence is entirely submitted to. How exceedingly is it to be desired that such a system should be universally prevalent! The awful description which the apostle gives us of the idolatry of his times, and of its demoralizing effects—deeply as it is colored, and darkly as it is shaded—is not less justly applicable to the Pagan nations of the present day, than it was to

those of antiquity. "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless." Romans 1:25-31

What a picture!! Who can contemplate it without horror? Yet such is the state of society—such the aspect of the moral world—such are the crimes that deform, and pollute, and torment the human race under the reign of Paganism, which, wherever it exists, converts earth into the vestibule of hell, a den of wild beasts, a range of malignant demons—which educates men for fiends amid the worst of excesses of depravity—and tortures its victims in this world, preparatory to their execution in the next. Who that pretends to carry in his bosom the heart of a man, much more who that professes to have the spirit of a Christian, which is the mind of Christ—but must mourn in bitterness of soul over this frightful wilderness, and long to bring these habitations of cruelty under the reign of Christian love?

Let it be recollected that whenever the religion of Jesus Christ is felt in its proper influence—whenever it changes the heart, and sanctifies the life—it does not merely turn men away from dumb idols—but causes them also to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world. It does not merely lead to a change of names, a substitution of one set of

religious rites for another; but while it removes all that is impious in idolatry—it displaces all that is odious and abominable in vice. It presents the first table of the law, and says, "You shall love God with all your soul," and then holds up the second, and commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Wherever the Gospel of Christ is permitted to govern society, it banishes all that can afflict—and introduces whatever can comfort the human race. All the crimes and the curses of society flee before it, while all the blessings of earth follow in its train. It not only brings learning, and arts, and sciences, with all that can adorn the mind and embellish life—but, as its chief benefit, it establishes the reign of love. This it has done to a considerable extent in many places already; and even its enemies have acknowledged it. And he who would see what true religion can do, has done, and will yet do—in exalting benevolence on the ruins of cruelty, and in establishing the reign of mercy—let him contemplate, as he may do, through the medium of missionary reports, the once wild and savage Eskimos—now converted into peaceful, harmless, and benevolent followers of the meek and lowly Jesus! Or the once murderous Tahitians, who reveled in the blood of human sacrifices, and slaughtered without remorse their own children, now exhibiting a character remarkable for its mercifulness and gentleness. Or the once marauding tribes of South Africa, casting away their poisoned arrows and their spears, and exhibiting a moral transformation as great and striking—as if lions were changed into lambs. And these are the triumphs of that true religion, of which the many branches, and the multiplied duties, are summed up in that one word—LOVE!

Friends of humanity! by all the love you bear to God or man, I implore you to labor to the uttermost in extending the true piety you profess. Estimate, if you can, the deep guilt of neglecting the cause of Christian missions. None of you have done what you could have done, or what you ought to do, in this most sacred, most important cause. I ask, what proportion of your property ought to be put in requisition for promoting the universal reign of love? Is a tenth, or a fifth, or a third, enough for that cause, the object of which is to teach all men that dwell on the earth to love God supremely, and each

other as themselves? Enough to be given for the purpose of cementing the whole human family together in a union of affection? Enough to give to a cause, which, when it is completely victorious—and completely victorious it will be—will banish pride, and malice, and envy, and revenge, from the abodes of man? How can you live in splendor—how can you enjoy your luxuries—how can you dwell with delight upon your accumulating hoards of wealth—while all this is needed to extend the influence of true religion? Alas! alas! because you have so little true Christian love in your own soul. Christian benevolence, were it felt in its full force, would lead to self-denial, to thriftiness, to simple habits, to personal sacrifices—in order that you may have more to spare for the great object of Christian missions!

But in addition to your money, and your influence, give to the cause of missions your private, sincere, fervent, believing, and constant prayers. It is only by the power of the Divine, Omnipotent Spirit, that the kingdom of Christ can be established in this selfish world. Read the chapter which we have considered (Romans 1), compare with it the present state of mankind—and then say if anything but the same power which called the chaos out of nothing, and raised this fair and beautiful world out of chaos—can effect a transformation so astonishing and sublime as would be effected, if this region of dark and vengeful passions were converted into an abode of holy, and mild, and benevolent affections. Beseech Jehovah daily, that he would arise and plead his own cause; for surely love must be eminently the cause of him who is infinite in goodness, and delights in mercy. Give him no rest until, in answer to believing and earnest prayer, he shall say, "Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth—so wonderful that no one will even think about the old ones anymore. Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more. The wolf and lamb will feed together. The lion will eat straw like the ox. Poisonous snakes will strike no more. In those days, no one will be hurt or destroyed on my holy mountain. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

Examination & Humiliation

SELF-EXAMINATION is the duty of every Christian, not merely that he may ascertain whether his faith be genuine—but whether it be sufficiently 'operative'. It ought not to be a frequent and undecided question with anyone, "Am I in reality a child of God?" But it should be a constantly recurring inquiry, "Is there any one branch of pious obligation, which, through the deceitfulness of the human heart, I do not feel? or through a criminal heedlessness, I habitually neglect?" The object of self-examination, with a believer, is to supply those defects in his graces, and to put away those remains of his corruptions, which, though they may not prove that he has no piety, prove that he has less than he ought to have. For this purpose, he should often bring his actions and his motives to the standard, and try his whole profession; what he does—which he should not do; as well as what he does not do—which he should do.

If we are to exhort one another daily, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, we surely ought to examine ourselves daily for the same reason. Our guilty self-love is perpetually attempting to throw a veil over our sinful infirmities—to hide their criminality from our view; and thus to keep us in a state of false peace by keeping us in ignorance. Against this deceitfulness of our heart, we can only be guarded by a frequent and close examination of our whole selves.

A frequent examination of our hearts and conduct is necessary, because of the multitude of our daily sins—which are often so minute as to escape the observation of a careless and superficial glance—and so numerous as to be forgotten from one day to another; and so, they either do not come into our notice—or pass out of recollection. And therefore they should be summed up every evening, and repented of, and forgiven, before we compose ourselves to 'sleep'—that nightly

returning harbinger, and monitor, and image, of approaching death. The advantages of frequent examination are so many and so great, as to recommend the practice strongly to all who are deeply concerned about the welfare of their souls—by this means, we shall not only detect many lesser sins which would otherwise be lost in our attention to greater ones; but we shall more easily destroy them, and more speedily revive our languishing graces; just as a wound may with greater facility be cured while it is yet fresh and bleeding.

"Sins are apt to cluster and combine, when either we are in love with small sins, or when they proceed, from a careless and unconcerned spirit, into frequency and continuance. But we may easily keep them asunder by our daily prayers, and our nightly examinations, and our severe sentences; for he who despises little things, shall perish little by little." A frequent examination of our actions will tend to keep the conscience clear, so that the least dirty spot will be more easily seen; and so tender that the least new pressure will be felt—for that which comes upon an already blotted page is scarcely discerned—and that which is added to an already great accumulation is hardly seen or felt. This, also, is the best way to make our repentance pungent and particular. But on this subject we shall have more to say shortly.

If self-examination be neglected for lack of opportunity, it is plain that those, at least, who have their time at their own command and disposal, are far too deeply involved in the business of the world, and the labyrinths of care—no man ought to allow himself to be so taken up in looking into his secular pursuits, as to have no time to look into the state of his soul; and to be so greedy after gain, or so intent upon the objects of an earthly ambition—as to be careless about examining whether we are growing in grace, and increasing in the riches of faith and love—reveals a mind which either has no true religion at all, or has reason to fear that it has none.

But besides that 'general review' of the conduct of the day, which we should take every evening; a portion of time should be frequently set apart for the purpose of instituting a more minute and exacting

inquiry into the state of our personal piety; when, taking in our hand the Word of God, we should descend with this 'candle of the Lord' into the dark and deep recesses of the heart, enter every secret chamber, and pry into every corner, to ascertain if anything is hiding itself there, which is contrary to the mind and will of God. Many standards will be found in the Scriptures, all concurring with each other in general purpose and principles, by which this investigation of our spirits should be conducted. We now propose 'the law of love'.

On these occasions of introspection, we should inquire how far our faith is working by love. I will conceive of a professing Christian who has set apart a portion of time, say on a Saturday evening, before he is to partake of the Lord's supper on the next day; or on a Sabbath evening, when he has received the sacramental memorials of the Savior's love—to examine into the state, not only of his conduct—but the frame and temper of his spirit. He is anxious to know how far he is living so as to please God. We can imagine him, after having read the Scriptures, presenting his fervent supplications to God, in the language of the Psalmist, and saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." Psalm 139:23-24

He now enters upon the business of self-examination; and the subject of inquiry that evening is the frame of his heart towards his fellow creatures, the state of his mind in reference to the law of love, the measure of his love, and the infirmities of his temper. Hear his holy colloquies with himself—"I have no just reason, thanks be to sovereign grace! to question whether I have received the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. I believe my creed is sound, nor have I any serious ground for suspecting the sincerity of my faith, or the reality of my conversion—my conduct, too, so far as the estimate of man goes, has, through the help of God, been free from open immorality. And though I may without presumption say that I love God, yet I am covered with confusion that my love is so weak and lukewarm. But my solemn business at this time is to examine into

the state and measure of my Christian love; for I am persuaded that whatever knowledge, or faith, or seeming raptures, or supposed communion with God, I may lay claim to—I am but a very imperfect Christian, if I am considerably deficient in love. Taking the apostolic description of this lovely virtue, I will bring my heart to the test.

"Do I, then, love, in the biblical sense of the word? Is my heart a partaker of this disposition? Is the selfishness of my corrupt nature subdued, and made to give way to a spirit of universal benevolence; so that I can truly say, I rejoice in the happiness of others, and am conscious of a continual benevolent sympathy with all others, and of a perpetual flowing of good-will to all creatures? Do I feel as if my own happiness were receiving constant accessions from the happiness of others; and that my soul, instead of living in her own little world within—an alien from the commonwealth of mankind, indifferent to all but herself—is in union and communion with my race? In short, do I know the meaning of the apostle's emphatic expression, 'He who dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him?' But let me descend to particulars.

"What do I know of the PATIENCE of love? Can I suffer long, or am I easily provoked? Am I patient under provocation; restraining my anger; keeping my wrath in subjection under the most provoking insults, amid the basest ingratitude, and the most irritating scorn? In my communion with my brethren in Christ, am I quick to take offense by any real or supposed slight or impertinence? Am I so jealous of my own dignity, so sensitive and irritable, as to be roused to anger by any little offense, and transported to wrath by more serious provocation? Am I revengeful under injuries; brooding over them in silence, cherishing the remembrance, and reviving the recollection of them, waiting for an opportunity to retaliate—and rejoicing in the sufferings which come upon those that injure me? Or am I easily conciliated, most forward to forgive, and ever ready to return good for evil? How have I acted since my last season of self-examination in these particulars? Let me call to recollection my

conduct, that I may see how far I have practiced the duty, and exhibited the excellence of Christian meekness.

"Love is KIND." Is kindness—universal, constant, operative kindness—characteristic of my conduct? Is the law of kindness on my lips, its smile upon my countenance, and its activity in my life? Or am I uncivil and uncourteous in speech, frowning and repulsive in my demeanor, grudging and unfrequent in acts of generosity? Have I the character among my neighbors and acquaintance, of a man who can be always depended upon for a favor, when it is needed? Or, on the contrary, am I by general report a very unlikely person to lend a helping hand to a person in necessity? Are there any instances of unkindness which I can now call to remembrance, which have brought dishonor upon my reputation, guilt upon my conscience, reproach upon the cause of true religion, and for which, therefore, I ought to seek the pardon of God through Christ?

"Love does not ENVY." Am I subject to the tormenting influence of that truly diabolical temper by which a person is made miserable in himself, and to hate his neighbor or rival on account of that neighbor's or rival's eminence? Am I so truly infernal in my disposition as to sicken and pine at the sight of the success or happiness of others—and to cherish ill-will on that account towards them? When I hear another praised and commended, do I feel a burning of heart within, and an inclination to detract from their fame, and to lower them in the estimation of those who applaud them? And do I secretly rejoice when anything occurs to lessen and lower them in public opinion, or to strip them of those distinctions which render them the objects of public dislike? Or do I possess that true spirit of love, which constrains me to rejoice with those who rejoice, to feel pleased with their prosperity, and to consider their happiness as an accession to my own? Have I indeed, that benevolence which delights so truly in felicity, as to make me glad at seeing it in the possession of an enemy or a rival?

"Love does not BOAST. Love is not PROUD." Is this descriptive of my spirit, in reference to my own attainments and achievements? Am I lowly in my own eyes, clothed with humility, modest in the estimate I form of myself, and all that belongs to me? or am I proud, vain, or ostentatious? valuing and admiring myself on the ground of any personal, civil, ecclesiastical, or spiritual eminence? Am I fond of exciting the admiration of others towards myself—and obtaining their applause? Or am I content with the approbation of my own conscience, and the smile of God? Do I wish to make others feel their inferiority, and to suffer under a mortifying sense of it? Or do I, from the most tender regard to their comfort, conceal, as much as possible, any superiority I may have over them; and make them easy and happy in my company? Do I indulge in haughty airs—or maintain a kind affability and an amiable humility?

"Love does not behave UNSEEMLY." Is it my study not to give uneasiness and offense, by anything unsuitable to my age, sex, rank, station, and circumstances; anything crude, rough, impertinent, or improper? Or am I continually disturbing the comfort of those around me, by inappropriate and unsuitable behavior?

"Love is not SELF-SEEKING." Am I habitually selfish—anxious only for my own gratification, and building up my own comfort—to the annoyance or neglect of others? Am I indulging a stingy, covetous disposition—feasting upon luxuries, and refusing to minister to the relief of human misery, according to the proportion in which God has blessed me? Or am I diffusing abroad my substance, considering that I am only a 'steward' of what I hold, and must account for it all? Am I overbearing and intolerant in discussion and debate—wanting others to sacrifice their views, in order that I may have everything my own way? Or am I willing to concede and yield, and disposed to give up my own will to the general opinion, and for the general good?

"Love thinks no evil." Am I suspicious, and apt to impute bad motives to men's conduct? Or am I generous and trusting—prone to think the best that truth will allow? Am I censorious and critical? Do

I feel more in haste to condemn than to excuse—and more eager to blame than to exonerate?

"Love does not rejoice in iniquity—but rejoices in the truth." What is my disposition towards those who are my opponents? Do I delight in, or mourn over their faults? Do I so love them, as to be glad when by their regard to truth and righteousness, they raise themselves in public esteem; and to be sorry when they injure their own cause, and give me an advantage over them by their errors and sins? Have I made that high attainment in virtue and piety, which leads me to delight in the righteousness of a rival, even when it exalts him? Or am I still so destitute of love as to say, in reference to his faults, 'Ah! so would I have it?'

"Love BEARS all things." Am I prone and anxious to conceal the failings of others—or to expose them?

"Love BELIEVES all things." Am I credulous of whatever is to the advantage of a brother?

"Love HOPES all things." Where the evidence is not enough to warrant belief, do I indulge an expectation and desire that further knowledge may explain the matter favorably?

"Love ENDURES all things." Am I willing to make any exertion, to bear any hardship, to sustain any reasonable loss—for the peace and welfare of others? Or am I so fond of ease, so indolent, so selfish, as to give nothing but mere ineffectual wishes for their comfort and well-being?

"What measure of holy love have I, of that love which puts forth its energies in such operations as these? Do I so love God, and feel such a sense of his love to me, as to have my soul transformed into this divine disposition? Does the love of Christ thus constrain me? Am I so absorbed in the contemplation of that stupendous display of divine benevolence, that unparalleled manifestation of infinite mercy, which was made in the cross of the Son of God, as to find the

selfishness of my nature melted, and all its enmities subdued, by this most amazing and transporting scene? I feel that without love, I cannot have entered into the meaning and design, the moral force and beauty, of the great atonement; that I can have no disposition which properly corresponds to that magnificent and interesting spectacle. I see that knowledge is not enough, that belief is not enough, that ecstasy is not enough, that hope is not enough; that, in fact, nothing can come up to the demands, to the spirit, to the design, of a religion which has the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ for its central object, and grand support, and distinguishing glory—but a temper of universal and practical benevolence. Have I this? If so, how much of it?"

Such should be the subject of diligent and frequent examination to every professing Christian.

HUMILIATION should follow examination. The act of humbling and abasing ourselves before God, is a part of the duty—not only of sinners, when they make their first application to the mercy-seat for pardon—but of believers through every successive stage of their Christian career. As long as we are the subjects of sin—we ought also to be the subjects of contrition. We may, through sovereign grace, have been justified by faith, and have been brought into a state of peace with God—but this does not render a very humbling sense and confession of our sins, an exercise inappropriate to our state—any more than it is inconsistent with the relationship of a child to humble himself before his father for those defects in his obedience, which, though they do not set aside his sonship, are unworthy of it.

"If we say we have no sin," says the apostle, "we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." This language applies to believers, and not merely to unconverted sinners; and so does that which follows—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The most perfect assurance of hope does not release us from the duty of abasing ourselves before God; and if an angel were sent to assure us that we are in a state of

acceptance with heaven, we would still lie under obligation to cultivate a contrite and penitential frame of mind. Sin, and not merely punishment, is the ground of humiliation. It is the most detestable selfishness to imagine that because we are freed from the penal consequences of sin, we are under no obligation to lie low in the dust. With what unutterable disgust we should look upon the individual, who, because his life had been spared by royal clemency, when it might have been taken by national justice, acted after his pardon as if that very pardon had entitled him to forget his crime, and live as carelessly and as confidently as he would have done had he never sinned. A pardoned sinner—and no believer is anything more—should ever be a humble and self-abased creature in the sight of God.

The subject we are now upon shows us what cause there is for humiliation before God. This frame of mind should not be founded upon, or produced by, mere general views of our depraved nature—but by particular apprehensions in reference to sinful practice—as long as our confessions are confined to mere acknowledgments of a depraved nature, our convictions of sin are not likely to be very deep, nor our sorrow for it very pungent. Such confessions will usually sink into mere formal and sorrowless acknowledgments of transgression. It is by descending to details—it is the lively view and deep conviction of specific 'acts of transgression', or specific 'defects in virtue', that awaken and sharpen the conscience, and bring the soul to feel that godly sorrow which works repentance. One distinctly ascertained 'act of transgression', or 'defect in virtue'—especially if it be much dwelt upon in its extent, and influence, and aggravations—will do more to humble the soul, than hours spent in mere general confessions of a depraved nature.

There are many things, on the ground of which no self-abasement can be felt by the Christian who is walking in any degree of pious consistency. He cannot confess that which he really has not been guilty of—he cannot be humbled on account of any act of open immorality, for he has committed none. In reference to actual vice,

he is to be thankful, not humble. He is to be humble, indeed, that he has a nature capable of it, if left by God; but he is to be thankful that he has not been permitted thus to disgrace himself. It is sometimes to be regretted that good people, in their public confessions of sin, are not more definite than they are, and that they do not express the particular sins for which they seek forgiveness of God. Without using language that seems applicable to adultery, and robbery, and drunkenness—our defects in all Christian graces are so numerous and so great, that there is no degree of humiliation which is too deep for those defects and omissions, of which the holiest man is guilty before God. And we have no need to go beyond the subject of this treatise, to find how exceedingly sinful and vile we must all be in the sight of God. Let us only call to remembrance the truly sublime description which the apostle has given us of the divine nature, and to which, of necessity, we have so often referred, "God is love"—infinite, pure, and operative love; let us only recollect his wonderful patience, his diffusive kindness, his astonishing mercy even to his enemies—and then consider that it is our duty to be like him—to have a disposition which in pure, patient, and operative benevolence, ought to resemble his; that this was once our nature, and will be again, if we reach the celestial state; and surely, in such a recollection, we shall find a convincing proof of our present exceeding sinfulness.

Let it not be replied that this is subjecting us to too severe a test. By what test can we try our hearts—but the law of God? What a proof is it of sin, when we find that the instances in which we have committed it are so numerous, that we want to get rid of the law by which it is proved and detected! O, what a fallen nature is ours, and how low has it sunk! We are not now examining it in its worst state, as it is seen among Pagans and savages, or even the best of the heathen; nor as it is seen in the worst parts of Christendom; nor as it appears in the best of the unrenewed portions of mankind—no! but as it is exhibited in the church of Christ—in the enlightened and sanctified portions of the family of man.

Must we not, after this survey, exclaim with the Psalmist, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse me from secret faults!" Who can carry in his bosom a proud heart, or on his brow a lofty demeanor? Who can look with delight upon his poor, starveling graces, and doat with fond and pharisaic eyes upon his own righteousness? Who is not stripped at once, in his own view, of all pride in his imperfect virtues, and presented to his own contemplation in the naked deformity of a poor, sinful, and imperfect creature, who has no ground for pride—but most ample and abundant cause for the deepest humiliation? Let the men who value themselves so highly on the ground of their moral dignity, and who are regarded by others as almost sinless characters, and who feel as if they had little or no occasion for the exercises of a penitential frame of mind; who pity as fanaticism, or scorn as hypocrisy, those humble confessions which Christians make at the footstool of the divine throne; let them come to this ordeal, and try themselves by this standard, that they may learn how ill-grounded is their pride, and how little occasion they have to boast of their virtue! Would they like that any human eye should be able to trace all the movements of their hearts, and see all the workings of envy, and jealousy, and wrath, and selfishness—which the eye of Deity so often sees there? Say not that these are only the infirmities of our nature, to which the wisest and the best of the human race are ever subject in this world of imperfection; because this is confessing how deeply depraved is mankind, even in their best state. Can envy, and pride, and selfishness, and jealousy, and revenge—be looked upon as mere peccadilloes, which call for neither humiliation nor grief? Are they not the seeds of all those crimes which have deluged the earth with blood, filled it with misery, and caused the whole creation to groan together until now? Murders, treasons, wars, massacres—with all the lighter crimes of robberies, extortions, and oppressions—have all sprung up from these vile passions.

What need, then, have we all of that great sacrifice which takes away our sin! And what need of a perpetually recurring application, by faith and repentance, to that blood which speaks better things than the blood of Abel, and which cleanses from all sin! What cause have

we to repair nightly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy; and daily, that we may find grace to help in time of need! With the eye of faith upon the sin-atonement offering that was presented to Divine justice by the Son of God upon the cross, let us continually approach the awful majesty of heaven and earth, saying "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Exhortation

We may be exhorted to Christian love, by a consideration of—

1. Our own peace and comfort.

We are not to be indifferent to our own happiness; we cannot be. Man can no more will his own misery, or be careless about his own comfort, than he can cease to exist. To seek for happiness and enjoyment is the first law of our existence—an inherent and inseparable propensity of our nature. In this respect, the angels, and the spirits of the just above, agree with man upon earth. There is no sin, therefore, in desiring to be happy; we could not do otherwise if we would. Ever since the entrance of sin, however, the heart is corrupted in its taste, so as to put evil for good; and, mistaking the nature of happiness, man of course mistakes the way to obtain it. All the pursuits of the world, however varying, and however unlawful, are the operations of the human mind, of its propensity to seek for enjoyment—they are all but so many efforts to obtain happiness.

To this feeling of the human bosom, many of the most comprehensive, beautiful, and encouraging invitations of the Gospel of Christ are addressed; and it is at once the glory and the peculiarity of the Gospel, that it addresses itself first, not to our moral—but to our natural needs. It meets us, not as 'craving after holiness', for of this an unenlightened, unconverted sinner knows nothing; but as

'craving after happiness'—a desire common to every human bosom—this is the meaning of that exquisite language with which the apostle almost closes the Word of God—"The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The same view appertains to the language of the Prophet—"Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters!" The thirst here mentioned is not, as has been frequently but erroneously stated, the strong desire of a convinced sinner after the blessings of the Gospel; but that of a miserable creature, after happiness. The people addressed by the Prophet are such as were spending their money for that which was not bread, and their labor for that which satisfies not; expressions which will not apply to those who are desiring Christ, and the blessings of his Gospel—but to those who are endeavoring to be happy without them—to all these the Lord Jesus is represented as saying, "Hearken diligently unto me. Come unto me—I will give you the sure mercies of David; then shall you eat that which is good, and your soul shall delight itself in fatness. I am the way to happiness. Men shall be blessed in me."

The blessing of the Gospel, by which men are made happy, is not only justification through the righteousness of Christ—but also sanctification by his Spirit. An unrenewed heart can no more be happy in any place or circumstances, than a diseased body can be rendered easy and comfortable by situation and external advantages. Until the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, be regenerated and brought to love God supremely, there can be no peace; as long as the heart is under the dominion of predominant selfishness, and all those lusts and passions to which it gives rise, it must be miserable. In the absence of Christian love, the human bosom must be the seat of uneasiness and distress. Happiness does not arise from possessions, so much as from dispositions—it is not what a man has, or where he dwells—but what he is. Whatever be the great source of felicity, the springs of it must be seated in our nature. There are certain dispositions, the absence of which would render heaven a

place of torment to us; and others, which would raise for us an Eden in the midst of the dreariest wilderness on earth.

Love is essential to the happiness of a moral agent. Love was the original rectitude of our nature. Man was made for love; to love God supremely, and to love whatever is like God or related to him. This loving disposition was not only his temper in Paradise—but it was the very paradise of his soul, in which he held the sweetest communion with God and universal being. This tuned his heart to harmony with his Maker and his fellow-creatures. Every movement of his heart was a movement of love; and all his desires so many aspirations of love—this constituted at once his honor and his happiness.

Hence the implantation of this grace of love in his soul, is the bringing back of man again to his original state, to his "divinely natural condition," and, therefore, it is the restoration of him to true delight and satisfaction. It is true that many, in the absence of Christian love, pretend to some kind of enjoyment, and have it too; for there are pleasures of sin, such as they are; but as to solid happiness—that which befits and satisfies a rational, moral, and immortal creature—it may with the greatest truth be affirmed, that the wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest—but is continually churning up mire and dirt.

Let any one consider the vile passions which love expels from the bosom, or which it keeps in subjection where it does not eradicate them—and ask if that heart can be the seat of comfort, or the region of peace, where these vile passions predominate. As well may we expect quietude and comfort in a den of wild beasts, or in a field of battle—as in a heart where anger, wrath, malice, envy, pride, and revenge, have taken up their abode! On the other hand, how calm, and composed, and cheerful, is that heart, where meekness is the presiding spirit; where love to God has introduced benevolence to man—a temper which follows it as closely as its shadow, and has subjugated the temper to the dominion of love! Let anyone consult

his own experience, and enquire if there be not an ineffable delight in the feelings of benevolent regard; whether such a state does not resemble one of those calm and glowing summer evenings, when nature seems to be quietly reclining on the bosom of peace. But how demon-like is the feeling when the turbulent evil passions gain the ascendancy; what agitation and what torment are the result!

Love is the very element which is congenial to the Holy Spirit; and renders the heart the abode of his delight. "The evil petulant passions," says Mr. Hall, in his beautiful tract on the Work of the Spirit, "surround the soul with a sort of troubled atmosphere, than which nothing is more contrary to the calm and holy light in which the Spirit loves to dwell." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and grieve not the Spirit of God,"—an expression, as we have already considered, which, from its context, intimates that the Spirit of God is susceptible of offense; and peculiarly so, by any neglect or violation of the law of love.

Everything connected with our spiritual well-being depends on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts—when this divine guest retires from our souls, and withdraws his gracious influence, he gives utterance at the same time to the solemn denunciation, "Woe be unto you, if I depart from you." The heart of the believer assumes then the character and appearance of a temple forsaken by its deity; all is ruin and desolation; the sacrifice ceases, the altar is overthrown, the fire is extinguished. We have all much need to present with the utmost fervor the supplication of the Psalmist—"Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me." No witness to our sonship, no consolations, no faith, no hope, no growth in grace, no joy and peace in believing—can then be enjoyed; instead of this, we shall be abandoned to worldly-mindedness, unbelief, despondency, gloomy apprehensions, and foreboding anticipations.

Now the Spirit will retire from that heart which is destitute of love, and which is perpetually indulging in tempers of an opposite

description. If, then, you would retain this divine visitant—this illustrious guest; if you would indeed continue to be the temples of the Holy Spirit; if you would have God abiding in you—cultivate the grace of love—invite him to your souls for this very purpose—yield yourselves to his tender solicitations and gracious drawings—open your minds to his gentle wooings—and when at any time you feel an unusual softening of mind, follow up the impression, and resign your whole selves to the benevolent power, of which you are at that time the happy subjects.

Love will promote your own peace and comfort, by conciliating the good-will and kindness of others. In all the interactions of life, we are generally paid back in the same kind of conduct which we maintain towards others. Ill-will, and pride, and envy, and selfishness, are sure to excite and to array against us the bad passions of mankind. Under such circumstances, many will take delight in annoying us; all our unkindness will come back upon us in innumerable acts of retaliation. But Christian love brings the esteem of others. "The meek shall inherit the earth"—their quiet, and inoffensive, and benevolent demeanor subdues, by a mild but irresistibly power, the most violent and injurious tempers of others. Christian love has often led the lion, the tiger, and the serpent, by its soft and silken cord. It was thus that Jacob subdued the rage of Esau, who was marching against him with purposes of revenge; so that, instead of exciting his wrath, "he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him." It was thus that David softened the heart of Saul, and disarmed his malignity of its murderous intention. "Is this the voice of my son David?" said the royal persecutor; and he lifted up his voice, and wept, saying to David, "You are more righteous than I, for you have rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded you evil." "Who is he who will harm you," said the apostle, "if you are followers of that which is good?" Who can be the enemy of love? Who will subject himself to the odium and reproach of being unkind to a loving heart?

In all these ways, do we promote our own peace by the cultivation of this temper. And can we be indifferent to our own comfort? Is it a

matter of no importance to us, whether our bosom be the seat of quietude or agitation? Oh no! it is not, it cannot be. But we have had our attention too much drawn off from ourselves. We have forgotten that it is said, "The good man shall be satisfied from himself." We have thought—or acted too much as if we thought—that the sources of peace were without us and beyond us. We are not yet cured of the disease of earthly-mindedness. We still labor under the delusion that happiness is something unconnected with moral disposition; that happiness is a matter foreign from ourselves, and arising from the advantageous circumstances of wealth, and rank, and fame.

It is time to take another course, to try another scheme, and to adopt other means. Let us seek God's grace to open springs of pleasure in ourselves. Not that we are to seek in ourselves for joy and peace, when suffering under a consciousness of sin; not that, as sinners, we are to seek relief from the burden of guilt, in our own virtues or graces; not that we are in any sense to look to our own works, as constituting our justifying righteousness; in all these views of our case, we must rejoice only in the Lord! But as those who are justified, and at peace with God, through Christ, we are to do the work of righteousness, which is peace, and enjoy the effect of righteousness, which is quietness and assurance forever; we are to covet the rejoicing which Paul speaks of as arising from the "Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace." 2 Cor. 1:12

There is the joy of justification, and the joy of sanctification—one, the delight of being restored to God's favor by the work of Christ; and the other, the joy of being restored to God's image by the work of the Spirit. Many seem afraid of the joys of a life of holiness, and count all delight but that of faith, to be a mere effervescence of self-righteousness, which only intoxicates the soul with pride. Why, then, has our Lord pronounced his sevenfold beatitude on the graces of a renewed mind? Why has he thus so emphatically and solemnly

connected happiness with holiness? The angels are happy, because they are holy; and the heavenly felicity is the perfection of sanctity. In proportion, therefore, as we give ourselves up to the influence of the government of love, we approach to the blessedness of the spirits of just men made perfect. He who lives in love shall drink of the waters of his own cistern, and be satisfied; he shall, every morning, find this heavenly manna lying upon the surface of his soul, and be fed with it to eternal life; and finding himself united by faith to the truth, he shall find peace within, though in the world he should have tribulation.

True religion is no sullen stoicism, or gloomy melancholy; it is not an enthralling tyranny exercised over the noble and generous sentiments of love and delight, as those who are strangers to it imagine. True piety is full of a vigorous and palpable felicity, such as ennobles instead of degrading the soul—such as invigorates, instead of enervating its powers—such as does not dispirit and sadden the mind afterwards, when the season of enjoyment is gone by—as do earthly and sensual pleasures. But true piety elevates the soul's views and purposes, and strengthens it for lofty enterprise and heroic deeds, by giving it to drink of the river of life, clear as crystal, which flows out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and refreshing it with what, in a true and a holy sense, may be called the 'nectar of immortality'!

True piety does not consist in mere airy notions, in cold and heartless orthodoxy, in pharisaic forms and ceremonies—but in faith working by love—love to God, to Christ, to the brethren, and to the world. This true piety does sometimes in its higher elevations, lead the soul into a Mount of Transfiguration, where it glows amid the splendor that falls on it from the excellent glory; or takes it to the top of Pisgah, where it sees the distant prospect of the promised land; thus placing it in the 'porch of heaven', and on the 'borders of eternity'!

2. Christian Love prepares the soul for making greater attainment in all other parts of true religion. Love is produced by knowledge and faith; but, by a reaction, it increases the power of its own cause. Love is just that state of heart which is adapted to the growth of all the plants of true piety, that without it are soon spoiled by the impure droppings of our own corrupt and selfish affections.

How much will our growth in KNOWLEDGE be aided by this state of soul! "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." A loving disposition prepares for the reception of experimental Christian knowledge. When Zoroaster's scholars asked him what they should do to get winged souls, such as might soar aloft in the bright beams of truth, he bade them bathe in the waters of life; and upon being required to state what they were, replied, "The four cardinal virtues, which are the four rivers of Paradise."

The reason why truth prevails so little with us—is because we have so little love! Our 'views of divine truth' are contracted and dim, not because of their narrowness, or the lack of a sun to enlighten them—but because both the luminary and the scene are enshrouded by those mists which our corruptions send up from our hearts to becloud our understandings. The holier we are, the clearer will the truth appear to our intellect, and the better able shall we be to bear the brightness of its glory; even as our Lord declares, that it is purity of heart which must prepare us to sustain the beatific vision.

The pagan sages also prescribed to their pupils a certain moral disposition, as essential to advancement in knowledge; and does Christianity. Plato taught that he who, by universal love and holy affection, is raised above the dominion of selfishness, comes into the nearest union with God, and attains to the highest intellectual life.

It is by the unction of the Holy One, mentioned by the apostle, whereby we know all things. Our souls are too clouded and too agitated by the bad feelings of our hearts, to make great attainments

in holy life. The moral excellence of the truth is hidden from us; it passes before us in dark outline, a dreadful and majestic form—we see its back parts—but we discover not the brightness and the beauty of its countenance, on account of our lack of holy conformity to its nature, and of fitness for its fellowship. Let us, then, grow in love—that we may grow in knowledge.

And with respect to FAITH, the more we are brought to feel the influence of the great scheme of redeeming love, in transforming us into its own image, and causing us to love others, as God for Christ's sake has loved us—the more firm will be our conviction of the divine origin of the plan which has thus wrought so marvelous a change upon us. He who believes has the witness in himself, in the revolution of feeling, of motive, and of aim, which has been produced in his soul. To him the experimental evidence of the truth of the Gospel appears with a brightness which none of the rest possess. He is himself an evidence of the divine power which accompanies the truth. No subtle argumentation can reason him out of the consciousness of that change and deliverance from predominant selfishness, which he has experienced. If all Christians acted fully up to their principles, and drank as deeply as they might do, and should do—of the spirit of love—the impress of heaven would be so clearly enstamped upon the church, that the divinity of the Gospel could no longer remain a matter of question with any. Who can doubt the heavenly origin of that system which has raised him not only to a heavenly hope—but to a heavenly temper?

3. The credit and honor of true religion require that we should seek after higher attainments in love. It is well known by all who possess only the most superficial acquaintance with the Word of God, that the end and design of the great scheme of revealed truth—a scheme which occupied the councils of heaven from eternity, and was accomplished by an incarnation of God himself; that the end for which the Son of God was crucified—a mystery which angels desire to look into—was not merely to bring a 'set of new theories' into the world, and to induce men to change one class of 'opinions' and

'religious forms' for another—still leaving the heart of man as impure and selfish as ever. On the contrary, it is known that God has come down to our nature, to raise us to his! The whole plan of salvation terminates in the renewal and perfection of the human race in the principles of purity and benevolence. It has been declared, wherever Christianity has traveled, that the essence of true religion is love. Hence expectations, which, though rising high, are well founded, have been indulged in reference to the benevolent and holy temper of the followers of the Lamb. Men have said, "Let us see how those Christians conduct themselves."

What disgust and disappointment have been, in many cases, and to a wide extent, the result! Has the Church of God yet answered to its own professions, or to the expectations of its spectators and enemies? Has true religion derived all the advantage, in the way of attestation and recommendation, which it should—from the conduct of its adherents? Are they seen everywhere—so meek, so just, so kind, so patient, so benevolent, so humble—as to excite admiration, and to extort the concession that the principles which could produce such conduct must be from heaven? On the contrary, have not multitudes who judge of Christianity, not as they should do, by itself—but by the conduct of its professors, received, from the offensive exhibitions of pride, and selfishness, and malice, which they are doomed to witness sometimes in the church—an unutterable disgust, an invincible prejudice against Christianity?

Where is the spirit of love which was exhibited in the great Author of Christianity, and which is enjoined in his precepts, and contained in his system?—is a question a thousand times asked, even by those who live in a Christian land—but who see little there of universal love. Creeds and catechisms, forms and ceremonies, devotional seasons and religious observances, will be thought of little worth, and will do little to ensure the esteem and to engage the imitation of mankind—in the absence of that loving disposition which all these things are adapted and intended to produce. The world's demand of the church is for love. "We have had," say they, "enough of religious

opinions; let us now have actions! We have had more than enough of articles of faith; let us now see more of the fruits of love." And how shall we meet that demand? Not by exhibiting less of truth—but by exhibiting more of love; not by giving up our creeds, or our forms—but by carrying them out into all the beautiful effects of benevolence and purity.

Christians, the character of true religion is entrusted to our keeping, and we are continually defaming it—or raising its reputation; and are either betraying it into the hands of its enemies—or conciliating their esteem towards it. It is high time for us to be more aware of our responsibility—high time for us to consider that we are perpetually employed in increasing or diminishing the ignominy of the cross. The good conduct of professors is a converting ordinance, and an edifying one too. "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify God, your heavenly Father." "Shine as lights of the world, holding forth the word of life." How? Not by attachment to doctrine merely—no! the light of TRUTH will do nothing without the light of LOVE. A fiery zeal for truth, unaccompanied by love—is the meteor which misleads—or the lightning which kills, or the eruption which overwhelms and consumes—all of which men are afraid of, and retire from. But a zeal for the truth, which is accompanied by benevolence, and produces it, is like the orb of day—men come to its light, and flock to the brightness of its rising.

O that my feeble voice could be heard, and my counsel followed, when I call the followers of Christ to a serious consideration of the necessity—for the sake of the credit of true religion—of being like their great Savior and Leader! O that my words could have weight, when I entreat them, as they regard the reputation of that Gospel which is all their salvation and all their desire—to covet earnestly, and to pursue constantly, this "more excellent way!" O that I could prevail, when I implore them—yes, implore them—to study the essence of their religion in its facts, doctrines, duties, and examples—to see if it be not love!

O that I could succeed in my wishes and my efforts, that they may no longer, by the indulgence of their passions, strengthen the bands of iniquity which bind men to their sins, and raise an enmity against true religion which shall aid and accelerate the work of damnation! O that a new era would commence in the history of the church, when finding what a dark cloud had been brought upon the truth—by the bigotry, intolerance, and enormous cruelties of corrupt and persecuting professing Christian communities—by the intolerant party-spirit which has more or less, infected all sects—by the bitter passions of controversy—by the pride of pharisaism—by the schism of the brethren—by the envy, covetousness, and malice of professors—that all true Christians would be baptized afresh unto repentance in the pure and peaceful waters of the sanctuary, confessing their sins of uncharitableness and ill-will. Then might it be expected that, as in the case of the Divine Head, so in that of the mystical body, the Holy Spirit, in his dove-like form, would descend to "rest upon it," and by an unearthly glory, prove and display its heavenly origin.

4. By the means of Christian love, we shall be enabled in a very eminent degree, to glorify God. For a man to live for himself, as the ultimate end of his existence, is no less base, and sordid, and little—than it is wicked. Selfishness of this kind not only pollutes the soul—but degrades it—it limits its desires within a very narrow compass—imprisons its hopes in a poor contemptible hovel—and drags down its ambition, from the glory of the infinite and eternal God, to the paltry and insignificant interest of a finite and unworthy creature. The heart of the real Christian is too large to be compassed within such selfish boundaries; understanding that God is the author of his existence, he makes him the end of it; that as he came from God, he may be continually returning to him.

Everything, in point of dignity and elevation, is to be estimated by the end it seeks. Its aims give it whatever value it possesses, and fashion it into their own likeness. Nothing can make that great—which only aims at what is little. While a sublime nature is imparted to that which seeks a sublime end. Now, a higher end, no creature in

any world, however exalted, can propose to itself, than the glory of God; and a lower one, the humblest believer in all God's family on earth, should never seek. This, indeed, ennobles the soul, and enlarges it into a universal and comprehensive capacity of enjoying that one unbounded goodness, which is God himself; it makes it spread out and expand itself in the infinite sphere of the Divine Being and blessedness, and makes it live in the fullness of him who fills all in all.

"We glorify God, by partaking of the impression of his glory upon us, and not by communicating any kind of glory to him. Then does a good man become the tabernacle of God, wherein the Divine Shechinah does rest, and which the Divine glory fills, when the frame of his mind and life is wholly according to that idea and pattern which he receives from the mount. We best glorify God, when we grow most like him; and we then act most for his glory, when a true spirit of holiness, justice, and meekness, runs through all our actions. When we so live as befits those who converse—with the great mind and wisdom of the whole world—with that Almighty Spirit that made, supports, and governs all things—with that Being from whence all good flows, and in which there is no spot, stain, or shadow of evil—and so, being captivated and overcome by the sense of Divine loveliness and goodness, endeavor to be like him, and to conform ourselves as much as may be, to him.

As God's seeking his own glory in respect of us is most properly the flowing forth of his goodness upon us; so our seeking the glory of God is most properly our endeavoring a participation of his goodness, and an earnest, incessant pursuing after the Divine perfections. When God becomes so great in our eyes, and all created things so little—that we reckon nothing as worthy of our aims and ambition—but a serious participation of the Divine nature, and the exercises of Divine virtues—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and the like—when the soul, beholding the infinite beauty and loveliness of the Divinity, and then looking down and beholding all created perfection mantled over with darkness, is ravished into

love and admiration of that never-setting brightness, and endeavors after the greatest resemblance of God, in justice, love, and goodness—when conversing with him by a secret feeling of the virtue, sweetness, and power of his goodness, we endeavor to assimilate ourselves to him—then we may be said to glorify him indeed." ("Select Discourses," by John Smith; a book, which for its combination of learning, genius, and piety, has scarcely its parallel in the English language.)

These fine sentiments should be engraved on our hearts, that they may be constantly reduced by us to practice. O, who that would have his nature exalted to the highest pitch of honor and happiness, ought not to cultivate that loving disposition which is the brightest representation contained in our world of its Divine Creator. To be the instrument of giving publicity to human excellence, of fixing the attention of others upon those qualities which, although eminently praiseworthy, were but little known, and exciting admiration on their behalf, is no small or uninteresting employment; but to exhibit a temper, which is the likeness of God; to manifest a virtue, in reference to which it may be said that it is an image of Deity—what an unspeakable dignity and delight! This is, in the highest sense of the term, to be raised into fellowship with God—a word that signifies not only an act of communion—but a state of communion; a communion of ends and aims, a kind of partnership in purpose and pursuit.

God is ever seeking his own glory, as his ultimate aim in all his works. His perfection prevents him from seeking a lower end, and a higher he cannot seek. To manifest himself is his supreme purpose; and we can easily imagine that the manifestation of love is the end to which all the other displays of his attributes are made subservient. Have we any hallowed ambition in our nature—here is scope for its gratification—here is an object towards which we may let forth all its energies—to hold communion with God in the manifestation of his glory! What can angels do more, except it be to do it more perfectly? Christians! see your high vocation—you are set apart not only by God

—but for him—constituted a people to show forth his praise—appointed not only to receive his grace—but to reflect his beauty. Your highest glory is to manifest His glory. His image is the richest ornament of your moral nature—and to manifest His glory to the world, is your great business upon earth. The lowest Christian shows forth more of God than the heavens which declare his glory, and the skies which shows his handy-work. Such a man is a brighter object in the universe, and teaches more of its infinite Author, than the sun in his mid-day splendor, or the moon in her beauty, attended by her starry train, that glitter upon the vault of night.

But to rise to this eminence, we must excel in love; we must put forth all the excellencies of Christian love—and put them forth in all their vigor, and fullness, and harmony—each in its time, and its place, and its occasion. For then shall we be like God—and to be like him is, in the highest sense, to glorify him; and to glorify him, by being made partakers of a divine nature, is to receive, so far as a creature can receive it, a kind of relative perfection, and to live up to the very height of our being, our honor, and our bliss.

5. Another motive, and it is the last we shall advance, for the cultivation of love, is—that love is the state of mind which carries the soul on to its ultimate perfection in the celestial state, fits it for that state, and gives it a foretaste of its felicity.

It has been observed by the learned Cudsworth, who appears to have borrowed the idea from Plutarch, that Divine Wisdom has so ordered the frame of the whole universe, that everything should have its own appropriate receptacle, to which it shall be drawn by all the mighty force of an irresistible affinity. And as all heavenly bodies press towards the common center of gravity—so is all sin, by a kind of strong sympathy, and magnetic influence, drawn towards hell. While, on the other hand, all holiness is continually drawn upwards to heaven, to embosom itself in glory. Hell is nothing else but that orb in which all evil moves. While heaven is the opposite hemisphere of light, where holiness, which is perfect love, eternally revolves.

Remove sin and disobedience out of hell, it will immediately lose its darkness, and shine out in all the serenity and beauty of heaven. Remove love from heaven, and its sun will set amid the darkness and the storms of everlasting night.

Heaven is not merely a thing to come; it is in one sense a present possession; for "he who believes in the Son has everlasting life." It is rather a state than a place—a state within us, rather than a thing outside us. Heaven is the likeness, and the enjoyment, and the service, of God. Heaven is that which every true Christian carries in his bosom now, and into which he will fully enter hereafter, when he shall be made perfect in love. To this state, all true religion is ever tending—the spirit of love is the motion and progress of the soul towards its eternal rest in the presence of God. No man can be prepared for the celestial felicity, while his heart is destitute of love. And whoever has the most love, knows most of the unseen and ineffable joys of the righteous. He lives in the vestibule of the heavenly temple; and is ready, whenever its doors shall be opened, to enter into the dwelling-place of God. The image of God is upon him, and the likeness of Deity is always attended with something of the happiness of the Deity. O, the bliss of that state, where the faculties of the mind, inconceivably expanded, shall let in the full streams of the Divine beneficence, and open themselves to the uttermost to comprehend the breadth and length, the depth and height, of that love which passes knowledge—where Divine goodness will so act directly upon the soul, as to raise it to a state of holy enjoyment, surpassing all our present imaginations!

What a motive to go on in the pursuit of love! Who does not wish to become better acquainted with his eternal state? Who does not wish to have a more correct knowledge of that condition in which he is to remain for ever? To attain to this, we cannot turn aside the veil which conceals the holy of holies from our view—we cannot look upon the throne of God—we cannot be rapt like Paul into the third heaven. No—but we may, like John, see the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, and feel it taking possession of our hearts in the

spirit of love. Rarely, indeed, do Christians attain, in the present state, in this unquiet world, to that calm repose of mind, that serene enjoyment, attendant upon the subjugation of the passions to the gentle dominion of benevolence, which conveys to them any very high notion of the supreme felicity which must be connected with the consummation of such a loving temper. Happy seasons do occur—but, alas, how seldom!—when they are so far released from the influence of every selfish and angry affection—when they so far feel the transforming influence of that Divine beneficence which they contemplate—as to be conscious of the perfect felicity which must arise from their being filled with all the fullness of love.

Let us seek more and more after those anticipations of our eternal state! We have not already attained, neither are we already perfect; but forgetting the things which are behind, let us reach onward, that we may apprehend that for which also we are apprehended in Christ Jesus. Heaven is not only above us, before us, beyond us—but may be within us—we may all know more of it than we do. Let us become more and more anxious to accumulate, not the perishing riches of silver and gold—but the imperishable wealth of a holy and heavenly temper. Let us aspire to immortality beyond the grave, and to the spirit of it upon earth—ever remembering that a Christian is one who professes to be born from heaven and to be bound to it—one who has more of heaven than of earth in his disposition—one who already dwells in heaven by dwelling in God—one who is fitted for converse with the innumerable company of angels, with the spirits of just men made perfect, with God the Judge of all, and with Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant—one who bears the impress of eternity, and is irradiated with some beams of the celestial glory!

And how can he give meaning, or consistency, or truth—to professions so high and so holy—except it be by that love which is the fruit of regeneration, the effect of faith, the necessary operation of love to God; and which, being cherished in the soul by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, comprehends in its embraces the whole

universe, and in the exercise of its good-will towards those who come under its influence!

"If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. Love will last forever. There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love." 1 Corinthians 13

MONERGISM BOOKS

Christian Charity Explained by John Angell James, Copyright © 2022

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now

known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions July 2022 Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068